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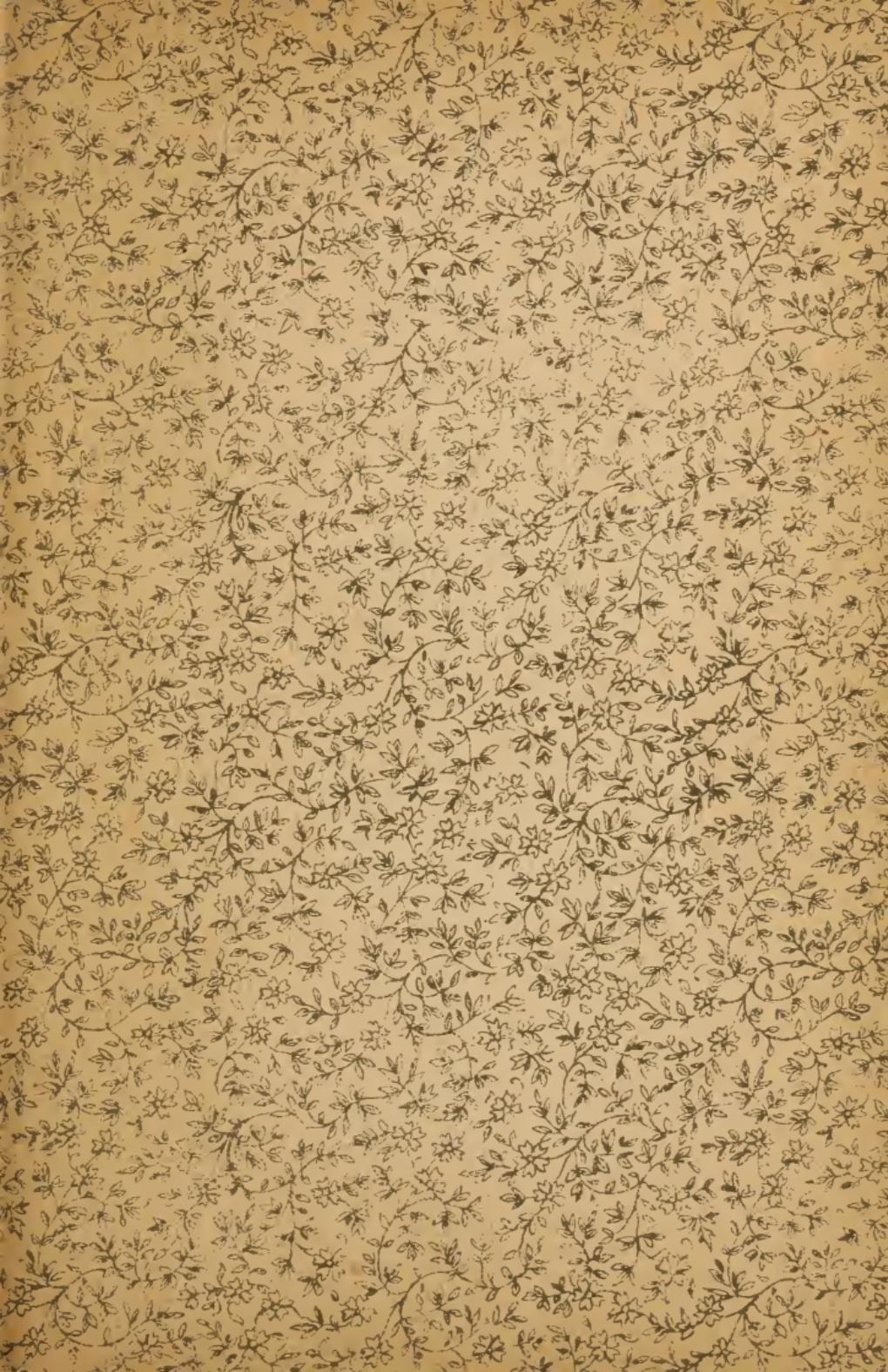
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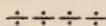
Edification of Baptized Members

OF THE

REFORMED CHURCH.



By Rev. John M. Schick, D. D.



"That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us "

2 Timothy 1:14.

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PREFACE.

THIS little book is addressed to the Catechumens of the Reformed Church, not because I believe that they need, more than others, the counsels herein contained; but because of my desire to recognize, in this way, the source from which the suggestion for this work has come.

The topics treated have nearly all come to me from questions raised by members of catechetical classes, while I have, during the last twenty five years, been permitted to instruct in the truths received and taught in our part of the Holy Catholic Church of Christ.

What some have inquired about may interest others. And I little more than half believe that there are not a few, who will welcome the coming of this contribution to our church literature because it contains in handy form a few simple things, which otherwise might hardly be worth putting into book form.

There is nothing in these pages, which your pastor would not easily have told you, if you had asked him; or which you could not, with a little pains have gathered from the literature of the church, but it is

put together here for the convenience of such as may lack inclination or opportunity for such a task.

So, praying that He who knows the sparrow's worth and recognizes the message of the grass as it grows, may also find some use for this little book in His service, it is sent forth as a bearer of a denominational message to the youth of our beloved Reformed Church, which whilst it has very modestly taken its place among the denominations of this country devotedly loves and serves its faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.

A Few Words to Catechumens.

A First Word to the Catechumen.

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YOU are a baptized member of the Church of Jesus Christ. As such you are entitled to such instruction in holy things, as your Catechetical training contemplates. Your parents and your Church owe it to you. The former because they promised it for you when you were baptized, and the latter, because the Church as your spiritual mother recognizes it as her duty to give you the training she demanded to be promised for you.

By your baptism you are continually assured that the sacrifice of our Saviour on the cross is of real and personal benefit to yourself ; — your Christian name is a continual reminder of the fact ; — and the congregation of which you are a member will ever help you grow in the enjoyment of its blessings.

It is to bring to your mind the riches of the grace in which you stand that you have been

gathered into the Catechetical Class by your pastor, who is daily bearing you on his heart, in earnest prayer to God that you may be so led by the Holy Ghost as to bring you to a fuller knowledge of the truth, in which you are being instructed and taught, so that you may enjoy the comfort that is yours in Jesus Christ our Lord.

And you should daily pray to your heavenly Father for that spiritual help you need to keep you in full consciousness of the high place into which God called you, when you were made a member of His kingdom upon earth. And now, since you are in the enjoyment of His favor, you will also pray for and endeavor to attain to that blessed knowledge which will enable you to worthily represent Him among your fellows. So that, as a catechumen, you may be continually growing in that grace by which you have been called into the fellowship of your faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.



Memorial

Was born on the day of

baptised by Rev.

on the day of

catechised and confirmed by Rev.

on the day of

Text of Confirmation Service.

Attended first Communion at

on the day of

Text at first Communion Service:

Page.

A. D.

A. D.

A. D.

Church.

A. D.

Your Memorial Page.

Write as carefully as you can your full name in the first blank line on the memorial page. Then fill all the other blanks as soon as it is possible for you to learn the necessary names and dates.

When filled out, the page will serve as a record of the great events in your life, and you will be able to refer to it on occasion, and not only refresh your mind with the facts recorded, but you will also, by reading the record, awaken some very interesting and profitable reflections.

Make it a rule to keep this page before you, and to often meditate upon the facts as you read them. Especially on anniversary days let yourself have leisure to call up the persons and facts and to dwell upon their worth in your life. Think of what they all mean for yourself and for others; and let the influence of such contemplation affect your life for good. A few suggestions are here

offered, not to point out all the thoughts—but to indicate something of the helpful possibilities in the right use of the memorial page.

Your Name.

Read it. It occupies the first line so that the page may be personal. Then ask yourself why this name is yours, and why you should have two or more names. This fact alone may bring up the most pleasant memories of the persons or circumstances which your name suggest, and will help to make you considerate in bestowing a name on anyone, whom God gives you the opportunity of naming.

You have, as you observe, both a surname and a Christian name. And the latter stands first because of its prominent significance. Your surname, or family name, reminds you of your relation to your earthly father, and your Christian name serves the same purpose with respect to your heavenly Father.

By your surname you are distinguished from the sons and daughters of all other families in the world. It serves to remind

you that you belong to your family and its connections. For one generation you carry the family honor a step forward. Shall it be upwards or downwards? The honor of your father's good name rests upon you, do not stain it. You owe it to both your ancestry and to your posterity to make the name one to be proud of. It stands for family history, family purity, family love. It suggests to you very distinctly the fifth commandment. It reminds you that you are not in the world for yourself and that others, parents and kindred, rejoice or suffer according as you make the name honored or not. Others are interested with you in all your acts and your family name keeps the fact before you.

But your Christian name — the one which world customs minimise and often abbreviate into initials; or discard altogether and soften into a pet or nick name — stands for even a more important fact. It serves, it is true, to distinguish you from the other members of your family, but that is merely incidental. Merely designatory characters are found in pet names and in many other terms as you know.

Kings of the same cognomen, for instance, are distinguished by numerals after their names.

But far more than such distinguishing is signified by your Christian name. Whenever you read or hear it, it carries the suggestion of your Christian relation to God and man. It recalls your baptism, when it was given you, and the obligations then taken. It stands first in order, by the providence of God, to emphasize the prime importance of the spiritual kingdom to which you belong, and to impress upon you the responsibility for living a Christian life.

It says you belong to your Saviour Jesus Christ, and ever suggests the new name written on the foreheads of those, who shall see the face of God and serve Him.

So your name will ever serve to keep you in mind of the two kingdoms in which God has called you; and as you study it you will be led to pray your Father to give you strength by the heavenly kingdom in which you live, to fulfill the duties resting upon you in both your earthly and heavenly relations whilst you are struggling homewards.

Your Birthday.

You will not likely forget this in the earlier day of your life. You will be reminded in many ways of its annual return. And it has many lessons which you should also learn.

The return of your birthday will make a very excellent time for self-examination — self-proving, if there were such a word, would be a better term. Your birthday is a proper time to look over your life during the year and see whether you have gone forward or backward; whether you have used or abused the mercy and love of God; whether you are better or worse in any way.

It is also a good time for renewing your vows and settling your intentions for the future. Let no memory of broken resolutions deter you. Make stronger ones this year, ones that will not break so easily. Do not make them just as good as last year, but better; and give yourself more loyally to your consecration to Christ. He will not fail you. It was not He who failed you when you broke former resolutions. Trust more in Him and less in self and try again. In Him is strength.

But your birthday suggests other questions, such as touching the purpose of your life. Why did God make you? Why did He endow you so wonderfully? Surely He meant a being such as you are for some great and good purpose. On your birthday look back over life. Are you finding out the reasons for your birth? the responsibilities of your being? the end to which you are hastening? the reality of your living?

Again, the birthdays as you look back over them plainly point to your advantages. How have you used them? How much of life is wasted? What opportunities has the past year left or the opening year offered? Pray that on your birthday you will enjoy the grace to face the solemn responsibilities of living in your father's house.

Your birthday suggests also your obligations to your parents. Through how many years have they carried you? What suffering, anxiety, selfdenial, efforts have they given to your growth and progress? On your birthday you will do well to recall all you can think that your parents have devoted to your

wellbeing, to the end that you may settle by what expression of love you will start your new year as a worthy recipient of such favors, and how you will prove yourself worthy of them.

Finally, on the birthday look forward to the day of your death. It is not a long look. As you look backward the years seem short, and when you look forward they seem longer but they are not so. Fill every year with such service as will make your backward glances, later on, occasions of gratitude. Whatever you will desire to look back upon, you will need to do now and the opportunities for doing it are becoming fewer.

Your Baptismal Day.

The anniversary of this day will perhaps be more easily overlooked. But it is important that oftener than on its anniversary you should consider it, and its significance. Recall how by it you are “admonished and assured that the one sacrifice of Christ upon the cross is of real advantage” to you.

One ought not to lose sight of the divinely appointed sign and seal of so great a blessing and spiritual inheritance, but it should be continually kept in mind so as to enjoy by the grace of God the continual assurance of our being “sanctified to be members of Christ” to the end that we may through the heavenly help daily “die unto sin and lead holy and unblamable lives.”

To recall your baptism is to recall also the fact that you are a child of Christian parents. And you will very properly, when reviewing this fact, thank God for the blessings that are yours in this respect: for the divine influences under which you grew up; for the prayerful life in which you developed; for the instruction you received ; for the care you enjoyed ; for the whole realm of blessed surroundings, which were yours because you were born and brought up in a Christian family.

On the anniversary of your baptism, when you have been especially reminded that you have been by the grace of God a babe in Christ, you will do well to contemplate your

growth in grace, and thank God you are not remaining an overgrown baby but are now becoming more and more a developed Christian until you come, in the language of inspiration, “unto a perfect man unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

The Day of your Confirmation.

The annual return of this day you should always observe with prayerful devotion. Too many are unable to recall the day at all. Some even are in doubt as to the year. And others even have absolutely forgotten the responsibility and neglected the fact of their confirmation.

This ought not to be. And if you will but keep the record of the memorial page, you can frequently recur to it, it will help you to ever remember the day and its vows, as well as the instructions you have received, through which you were enabled to make them intelligently.

You will remember with what faithful devotion your pastor sought to teach you the importance of the Christian life; how he tried to

help you realize that belonging to your saviour Jesus Christ it was your privilege to confess Him before men; how he prayed with you and for you that you might be strong to give your life wholly to the service of the Saviour who so loved you as to offer Himself the sacrifice for your redemption.

You will never forget the holy fervor with which you took upon yourself the obligations of the Christian life; nor will the recollection of the blessed experiences of the confirmation service ever fail to give you pleasure so long as you continue steadfast in that communion into which you sacredly entered when you made your sponsor's vows your own.

It will do you good to frequently review your life in the light of the confirmation hour. Ask yourself, and answer your own questioning honestly as before God, about your continued sincerity, devotion, zeal. And the moment when you detect the slightest departure from the Christian life confess to your Father, and repent, and return. There is no doubt about His forgiving love, let there be no delay in your return when straying.

After your confirmation keep the day and the fact always in mind, and stately call yourself to a report of your doings.

On the anniversary of the day read over the confirmation services, hymns and all. Recall the text and the sermon with its admonitions and celebrate the joy of the first occasion by repeating the vows, praying the prayers, singing the hymns; and reconsecrate yourself to that service which is the only perfect freedom, which multiplies all your joys and adds not a single sorrow.

Use in this way the anniversary of your confirmation and in all its using fail not to realize how very real the Christian life in all its experiences is and learn to frequently review them, so that gratitude may be awakened in your heart and God be praised with your thanksgiving.

The Anniversary of your First Communion.

Record the date of your first approach to the Holy Communion and also the text of the sermon and make it a rule to annually observe the day in prayer and some act of benevol-

ence, which will be a sort of renewal of that blessed joy with which you first accepted the assurance that you are a partaker of the sacrifice of your Saviour and a sharer in all its benefit.

Although every communion of your life will serve as such, yet in your personal Christian experience, it will be well to annually celebrate the fact of your union with the Lord by recalling your communion, and by special self-examination and prayerful meditation upon your blessed Christian life among men.

Under the topic of the Holy communion you will find suggestions which will be a guide for your course in this connection, only make its examination, the prayer, the meditation more particularly with reference to your life as a member of Christ, on this day celebrating your first enjoyment of the condescension of your Lord and Saviour who gave His life that you might live in Him and for Him among men.



Your Vows.

Catechetical instruction is based upon the covenanted relation to God, in which you stand as a baptised member of the Church, and is, itself, an expression on the part of the Church, that it recognizes the relation ; and all the effort of your parents and your pastor have been directed to awaken in your heart the desire to make these obligations personally your own.

Ever since your baptism you have held an assured place among the children of God ; and, since you have been able to learn, you have been trained in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ and frequently been reminded of the obligations resting upon you by virtue of this relation.

The vows made for you and in your name at your baptism are binding upon you. Your renunciation of the world, the flesh, and the devil is as definite and full as if you had at the time been able to personally make it yourself. Your allegiance to the kingdom of heaven was at the same time as positively made. And the vows which in one sense

bind you to loyalty to that kingdom, bound at the same time and just as truly, with that kingdom all its benefits to you.

You are not in any sense independent of, but on the contrary you are positively connected with, the kingdom by ties as real — more real — than those which bind citizens to their state or nation.

In these vows you have first of all renounced the devil with all his works and ways; the world with all its vain pomp and glory; and the flesh with all its sinful desires. And then you have vowed to believe the things necessary to your salvation ; and thirdly you have vowed to be trained in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

By the first you are separated from the influences and forces that bind you to enmity towards God. In this triple renunciation there is represented a complete severing of the bonds of earth and sin. True, Satan does not recognize you as free from his dominion. He means to hold and keep you as his own, and so far as he can control you by the inclinations of the flesh he will make unreal to

you the act by which you declared yourself as free from his sovereignty. You will therefore, by fully appreciating the significance of this vow, be able to see that it is not an additional burden you have accepted, but that on the contrary, it is a declaration made for you of your wish to be free from the burden of sin, and in the desire so to be, you have renounced all that binds you to it.

By your second vow you have declared your faith in God as your Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier; and thus your allegiance to this kingdom in which you stand has been declared. For this is the distinguishing mark of the Redeemer's kingdom. This is the victory that overcometh the world even our faith. Everything else about our religion may be imitated. Christian morality may for sufficient purposes be simulated. The unbeliever may give alms. The infidel may pray. But there is no imitation of faith. You have confessed your faith and so are, as long as you have not renounced it, thereby a member of the kingdom of the redeemed, consequently you may regard your second

vow in the light of a declaration of allegiance, and not as only a promise to believe.

Your third vow is to grow in grace. True, your sponsor promised to train you in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. But it was made in your name, and in your behalf, and implies the desire on your part, as born of God, to grow in the life into which you are begotten by the word of truth, so that is it wholly proper for you to see in your third baptismal vow a continual obligation to true devotion to the kingdom into which you are incorporated by the sacrament of baptism.

By a frequent review of these precious vows ; by a constant appreciation of their significance ; and by a loyal adherance to them, you will realizet he freedom, power, and life of the kingdom into which we are begotten by the will and grace of God. You will thus keep before you the fact that, though in this world, you are a member of the heavenly kingdom and you may also be led to seek the strength belonging to it so that your growing in this grace will daily become

more worthy of your place in it. Constantly pray God to keep you true to your vows.



Your Catechisation.

Your catechetical instruction ought not to be regarded as a preparation for beginning your religious life, but it is, on the contrary, to be considered as a training in that life, which, as a covenanted child of God, is yours to enjoy and to declare among men.

You are a baptized member of the Christian family, consecrated to God in the sacrament of the Saviour's own appointing and, as such, you are incorporated into the kingdom of God and are now being instructed in the things which make you blessed. Instead of being separate from Christ and being made ready to be led to Him, you are already dedicated to His service and being trained for it. You are a member of His kingdom learning to know its privileges and hopes, a recruit being drilled.

Your catechetical instruction did not begin when your pastor enrolled you as a mem-

ber of his class, nor will it end when the spiritual Council of your congregation has expressed itself as satisfied with your preparation for the rite of confirmation and you are, by prayer and the laying on of hands, fully set apart to the service of God.

It began at your mother's knee, when you were first taught of Jesus, and when your parents were fulfilling their baptismal obligations by reminding you often of your vows, and when they were teaching you how to pray, what to believe, and how to live.

So also your instruction was continued when you were brought to Sunday school and when in the services of the Church you were being trained in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and so long as you sit among the leaners will, in a true sense, your catechisation be continued.

But all this only emphasises that particular part of your religious training which is specifically called the Catechetical Class. Here your pastor gives his personal care to your spiritual growth. The very best talent your church has at her command is devoted to your

culture and you will do well to make good use of your opportunities. You are by this means being taught the doctrines and customs of your own denomination and if you acquire the full benefit of the instruction offered you, you will be the better qualified to live the Christian life, in which you have been set apart as a child of God. You will know what to believe in order to live and die happy.

Make good use of the course of instruction so that you may make intelligent answers to any one inquiring of you a reason for the hope that is in you, and, especially, so that you may be able to be a worthy member of that Church in which God calls you into his fellowship.

Above all pray that in these lessons you may learn to know and love your faithful Saviour Jesus Christ more and more until you be like Him.



**Commit the Questions and Answers
to Memory.**

You are in the best period of life for storing your mind with religious truths. As you grow older you will find it more and more

difficult to acquire definitions and accurate statements of truth. And just the time when most persons are attending upon catechetical instruction, is the very time when this fact is not appreciated to such an extent as to make the effort at memorizing the catechism seem to be anything else, than a very great burden.

Occasions will soon come in your life, if they have not already presented themselves, when your helpful character as a child of God will be greatly increased by having at command definite statements of what you and your church believe. Your older brethren have frequently been asked what does your church teach on some given questions, and I know of some at least, who would have been greatly helped if they had only been able to use the language of our catechism but were not able to do so because they had lost the opportunity of memorizing it in the days of their catechetical classes.

You should “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.” not merely so far as it relates to your own personal re-

ligious standing, but also with respect to the place your church occupies in the general body of Christ, and for this end you will be made stronger by memorizing the catechism. Many a soul has been helped on its heavenly way by the light some other Christian has been able to give it in times of doubt or trouble. For such work your catechism would furnish you much material; but you can only make good use of it by having it in mind so as to keep it, as it were, always in easy reach.

Again to store your mind with such clear statements of truth as you will find in our catechism will also enable you, in times when you cannot read good literature, to comfort yourself with the facts of our holy religion. I recall an afflicted Christian, who, in her old age, when she was too blind to read and too deaf to hear, used to comfort herself, as she waited for her deliverance, by repeating over and over again the questions and answers of the catechism and hymns and passages of scripture which she had learned in her youth. All else was shut out from her but that which she had laid up in her memory.

Commit to memory and review often the catechism you are learning, for by so doing you will both be storing your mind with the explanations your pastor is making for you and be strengthening yourself with correct and authorized definition of spiritual truths. Do not allow yourselves to believe that the text is too difficult to memorize. The very difficulties will fix with them the explanations, whereas if you have only seen the difficulty and heard the explanation, you will very likely forget both and sometime in the future the very light you or some enquirer may need, will have gone from you.

Make it a rule then, whatever be the hindrances in your way that you will now, when memorizing is comparatively easy, commit the Heidelberg Catechism to memory as a stored treasure for Christian usefulness.

A Few Words to Worshippers.

The Worship of God.

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Christians cannot value too highly the privilege of worshiping God, for by the communion thus enjoyed with the Father, every child of God is constantly strengthened in the divine life. In worship you withdraw from the world and come home to your heavenly Father. And in this exercise you are continually reminded of your relation to God and His Church, of your separation from the world, and of your union with Christ.

Whenever you engage in worship, you affirm the same vows you made when you undertook the engagements of the Christian fellowship; you acknowledge the full right of God over all your affairs ; you claim your rights as a member of the commonwealth of your Saviour; and you enter into the very pleasure of heaven, for the highest delights in

heaven above are found in the adoration and praise of God.

Your worship will be private or public in the fact of its being participated in alone or in company, but the worship and its significance is one, not two.

So also there are several modes of worship, —which will be presented to your consideration, but you are to keep in mind that this separation is merely for convenience, and that, although one may think or speak of the separated elements of worship, worship itself is constituted of these elements as a whole. Singing and praying, adoration and alms-giving, meditation and consecrated living, all taken together, constitute one whole act, to which violence is done when any one element is omitted.

So when you are urged to exercise yourself in any one given part of worship, you will keep before you the fact that such particular exercise cannot take the place of some other one. There can be no substitution of one element of worship for another. Much praying could not make up for little giving; or much

giving take the place of omitted praying. Your religious life needs the benefit of every form of worship, and in your growth in grace you will find the greatest benefit from the fullest participation in all worship.



Your Attendance upon Divine Service.

Be regular in your attendance upon the services of the Sanctuary. For there you meet your heavenly Father in a sense that you cannot meet Him elsewhere. There you are withdrawn from the world in a way otherwise impossible.

As soon as you enter the sanctuary you should shut out the whole world ; first, by your own private prayer upon entering your pew; and then by your participation in the worship with your brethren in the congregation. The whole service, from the voluntary onward is helpful. And just in proportion as you enter into all the services with your whole heart, will you the more fully be withdrawn from the world; and your soul accord-

ingly refreshed and strengthened to carry on the warfare of your faith.

Of course the tempter will here as elsewhere attempt to fill your mind with other, worldly, thoughts ; for he ever seeks to deprive believers of all spiritual food and nourishment. And it calls for the strongest exercise of your spiritual powers to ward off his approaches at all times; but it becomes you as a child of God, to glorify your Father by continuing steadfast in your devotions, and unless you do you will find yourself led off from the worship of God entirely, and deprived of that benefit God means you to enjoy in His services.

The right way for you is to make it a rule to engage in all the services ; pray every prayer with your pastor or whoever may be leading the devotions; sing every hymn and sing audibly. Sing with the whole heart, so as to have no break in your worship. There is perhaps no time when worshippers are led off more frequently than during the singing ; for then is it possible to whisper a word unobserved, as if God did not see. There is,

again, no easier avenue of the tempter's approach than by the way of making you believe that you cannot sing. Everybody can say the words with the rest, and even if you should strike a wrong note in your singing, it will be better to sound a discord in glorifying God, than by your silence to deprive yourself of the blessed participation in the service of song. If you cannot sing well sing a little more softly, but sing anyway so as to remove temptation from you.

So, also, participate, as before God, in the meditation of the sermon. This does not mean to merely listen to the sermon to enjoy it, or to wonder at your minister's learning or his ability to speak. Reverently attend upon it as a message from God's word to yourself with the rest of the congregation. Your pastor aims not at your entertainment, but at your edification. His object is not to give you pleasure but help. It is all the better of course if you can find pleasure in the sermon but even when this feature is lacking, through inadaptation on your part or your

pastor's, you should nevertheless enter into the meditation as before the Lord in worship.

Again you cannot afford to not join in the almsgiving, not merely to dispose of your money, but to acknowledge your obligation to God and to give so much evidence of your willingness to share in the work of the Lord in saving the world, and in supporting His cause.

Thus by personal participation in the whole service will you be drawn into more real communion with God, and the means of grace, and your approach into the presence of God will be a blessing to your spiritual life.

Besides your attendance will make the worship of God a greater delight to your fellow Christians. It is always a most encouraging experience to go to worship and then find many of God's children there. It encourages your minister both in his preparation and in his leadership of the church. It encourages your fellow Christians in making them feel that you have an interest in the church and also in giving them the benefit of

a full service. It also encourages strangers and unbelievers who will be won to Christ if they find a church filled with real devoted followers of Christ worshiping God, to welcome and lead them heavenward.

Besides your denomination's influence for good will thereby be made stronger. Your church will always be a gate of heaven and those in need of spiritual help will find their way thither. There is no greater help to a congregation's usefulness than that manifest in the constant and regular attendance upon divine service. When others are made to realize what the worship of God means for you; when they see that it is worth a sacrifice to you ; when the beneficial results of the service upon yourself are seen and known, then will your congregation draw the spiritually needy to see their help with you.

But as these consequences can follow only regular attendance at worship, attend every service as you live every day of your Christian life—for the glory of God—for the honor of His church—for the salvation of your fellow men—and your service thus wholly un-

selfish will strengthen you in the Christian life of faith.

Be regular in everything that affects your Christian walk and conversation, in public and private devotions as well, for only so may you expect the greatest benefit for your personal communion with God.



Praying.

Of course you will pray often and regularly when once you appreciate the comfort and significance of prayer. Especially when you are able to understand that a believer's prayer is an expression of trust and not a mark of fear. It is not the cry of a coward but the petition of a son, and therefore not a supplication for the fulfilment of his self-willed desires, but a confession of his self-surrender to the will of God.

In prayer you should recognize the Christian's privilege of communing with a kind and loving parent, in which by telling your needs and longings you also are enabled to learn the will of your heavenly Father; for

the true prayer of faith is: “not as I will but as Thou wilt.”

There is much heathenish thinking about praying. Many cry out in times of danger and trial to a God they dread and before whom they tremble and call their wail a prayer. Others plead for deliverance from pain and burdens they are unwilling to bear, in hopes of escaping the disagreeable. Still others beg as slaves of an unwilling tyrant for what they think they must have. And so on instances might be multiplied in which even good Christians pray exactly as the heathen do, moved by fear or dread, or other purely selfish motive.

So long as you pray in such a spirit you take the real sweetness out of the prayer. Our Saviour in every prayer we know of, set us a different example. He always prayed with submission to the Father whom He yet always loved and trusted, because they were one ; and when He taught us how to pray, He taught us to say: Our Father.

Consequently, when you as a Christian approach the throne of Grace, you may always

come in the spirit of a son. Every time you pray you assure yourself of the filial relation you sustain to your heavenly Father who grants you all things good for you both as to your body and to your soul. And every Christian needs to frequently repeat to himself this very assurance which the world and its prince so constantly are trying to take away.

For this reason you have continual reason for thankfulness in being permitted thus to pray, for without it you could not give expression to your gratitude for the mercies you enjoy.

Now, when you appreciate that prayer is truly an act of worship to God, and one of communion with Him the very common question of answer to prayers becomes an insignificant one. How could it be otherwise? Of course God answers the prayers of His children. Generally they are answered before the petition is formed. But whether the answer be just what you wish or not is a matter of the least consequence as compared with the other fact that God has granted you another blessed assurance that He is your

loving Father and that you are in fact His own child.

Cultivate in this spirit the habit of frequent prayer and your pleasure in the exercise will be in proportion to your sincerity and your faith. Besides you will find growing upon you the consciousness of your worship with the Father. You will feel God to be your Father more clearly as you find yourself coming to Him as such in your regular approaches to the throne of Grace. Therefore determine to pray regularly and frequently, and carry out the determination under all possible circumstances. For your Christian life will be stronger as you live in the spirit of Prayer.



The kinds of Prayer.

There are several forms of praying to which it will be well for you to give some attention.

There is the public prayer of the sanctuary; the family prayer of the home; and the personal prayer of the closet. And these neces-

sarily differ from each other both in form and in spirit. But each form has its place in the development of the Christian life and is, in fact, indispensable to your growth in grace, and it will be well for you to observe the peculiarities of each and in all your praying remember them.

Private Prayer.

Unquestionably the most personal approach to God is in the private, closet prayer. Here you shut out the world and are alone with your Father. You are face to face with Him as it were. And this is not because God is any nearer to you, but because you have by your own act shut out the world and have drawn in your mind to commune as a child with a loving father. To do this most effectively it is well to have a place where you can be alone, and also to have a time when you will not be disturbed. From infancy you have offered your prayer on retiring and have committed yourself to the guardian care of God. You keep this up of course. The morning hour when you are fresh, before you

enter upon the duties of the day is even a better time. But, whenever you take the time, it is for you the place and time when you open your heart to God.

Here all your praying will be out of the experiences and necessities of your own life. You will pray for the things you most need and the things in which you are most concerned, and it will include your own affairs ; those of your particular friends; of your congregation; of your church and all her institutions and Boards as you are interested in them; and in short, you will pray for all your personal needs and relations.

Here you will come into the confidential state of fellowship with God and from such communing you will receive help and strength as well as protection and assurance against any evil or temptation or sins. The whole occasion is one of your very individual life. Nowhere else will you realize as fully that God is your Father and you are His child.

But this is not the whole of personal private praying, there is another form of pray-

ing which is especially to be cultivated and that is the constant prayer; ejaculatory praying it is sometimes called. In this habit you lift your heart in a sentence prayer, or in a sigh for immediate help in time of danger or temptation. All through the day and in the waking hours of the night will opportunity for such be afforded. For such purposes quotations from the Bible and particularly from the Psalms will be very helpful. As for instance on awaking to say "when I awake I am still with Thee", or upon lying down to say "I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for Thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety." Or when you are in doubt "Thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for Thy name's sake lead me and guide me;" and when you have had help in any time "How excellent is Thy loving kindness O God; therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wing." Well, a book might be made of just such prayers ready and proper to be used under all circumstances. You will find them as you

read your bible, store them and when occasion comes use them.

By such constant praying you will cultivate a sort of unending communion with God which will help you in many a time of temptation, and above all, will make your life an act of worship, an abiding with the Lord.

That is the way you do with your best friends. You do not get up in the morning and go to your mother and make a five minute speech and forget her till evening and make another one and go to bed. You would think it strange for anyone to treat a father or a friend in such a manner. Treat God as your best Father and when you need His help, or have received from Him a grace, ask for the former, give thanks for the latter. Pray thus without ceasing.

Family Prayer.

Families meet best when they meet around the family altar to worship God. Christian families, which recognize God as their Father, can in no better way emphasize the

faith that is in them, than by worshiping Him as a family.

Family prayer is also of two occasions. First when morning and evening the household is called together to worship God; and the other when they meet at the family table for their regular meals.

Here are afforded to every Christian father the opportunities for declaring the family allegiance to God their Father and claiming for them that Father's favor.

The regular gathering of the family at morning and evening prayers is the time when the word of God is read with the household. Then God is honored in the reflection on His word and the whole House made to give recognition to the real head of the family.

These prayers will of necessity be more general than the individual closet prayer. There are wants of the whole household in the relations of the members of the family one to the other. And these very relations are bettered by a common approach to the throne of grace. For as we pray together we

humble ourselves together, and, recognizing the help we each receive, are ready also to help each other live the life that is in us from above. And every member of the household ought not only to be present at the family worship, but also unite in these prayers.

Families ought to pray regularly. To do so will mean a break with the world which cannot but lead to a truer family life. The world crowds us too much any way. Both by pleasure and by care it is crowding out the real family life, and there is no stronger bulwark against the encroachment of the world than a regularly conducted family worship when each one, in his love to God and one another, feels himself constrained to be present even at the sacrifice of some pleasure, which will prove to be no sacrifice at all, when the influence of the Christian family is taken into consideration. It is a good thing to overcome the demands of business or the requirements of society in order to be at home when the family meets for prayer. It will serve as a continual reminder of the fact that God has lifted you above the life of

earth and called you into His fellowship. And you will thus daily enjoy the opportunity of declaring your allegiance to God in your victory over the demands of the world.

Family altars are the unseen memorials of the triumph of Christ in your family life. If you have not yet erected one in your home let not another day pass without your making a family center of prayer for the honor of your Savior.

Little need be said of the propriety of the shorter and more frequent family prayer at table. Some families neglect it, but where there is no prayer of gratitude offered for the food you eat, you may look for all sorts of irregularities.

However there is no more beautiful and appropriate service any family can render than to reverently acknowledge the source of all your comforts when you are about to partake of the necessities of life. Here you are reminded of the real bread of life and of the real necessities of life. And here you will have to look to Him who has supplied one want to supply the other also. Here also in

the supply you enjoy you will recall the needy and the hungry in all the world, and you will, as you enjoy the blessings God gives you, become the more ready to share your bounties with them that lack.

Your meal itself becomes a sacred place, and the Christian atmosphere, with which your prayer graces it, will make it a cheerful, blessed gathering. Cultivate the habit of prayers at table.

Before leaving the subject of the family prayer, it is worth saying to the fathers of every family that in addition to the helpful influence of the family prayer, you owe it to your children to teach them that they are a part of God's family and this can be taught in no way better than in family prayer.

Public Service.

By the public service of the sanctuary is meant any regular worship of the congregation: The regular service of the Lord's day —any week day service which may be held for the edification of the church, the Sunday School service, meetings for prayer of any

kind; in short any service of the church held for prayer.

This is the third kind of praying to which your attention is drawn. And before speaking of it more in detail, it should be said that all the families of the congregation join in the public services of the sanctuary, and no one can without personal spiritual loss be absent from them.

Even when one has a good and sufficient excuse for absenting oneself from the service, the excuse may be good but the loss and influence of the absence remains. Just as one may have a good explanation for failing to enjoy any other blessing he may have lost.

The public service being, as it is, the approach of a whole congregation to the throne of grace is very much more general than even the family prayer is and it ought to be very much more comprehensive because it is for all. The causes for gratitude are many and varied and the true public thanksgiving is such as will enable all as they unite in it to find it to be the expression of their own gratitude in one prayer. So also the needs of the

congregation vary and the prayer is consequently broader and more general. There are many things which all Christians love and for which all pray, but even these, when the prayer is a general one, are best so expressed as to really be a prayer for all these things.

This is one thing which those who lead in prayer too frequently forget. And which also those who follow the leaders in prayer lose sight of.

But the point is to be remembered that in the public worship the whole people are expected to unite. You are to pray with the leader. His petitions you make yours and when some occasion arrives and you are to lead others in prayer, pray for the things becoming the whole people, so they can follow you. Your prayer will be more truly followed.

Young Christians, when their attention has not been called to the matter, often forget that they are to join in the prayer. The prayer is to God not to the congregation, and you are not present to hear or enjoy praying but to join in the prayer. And if you do

join in it you will not be so easily distracted in your devotion. A prayer service is sometimes made to be confusion by each one offering his own private prayer. You will always do best when you pray with the minister.

Join in the public prayer, and by so doing you will stand before God as among His children, and you will thus reassure yourself that you are in His kingdom. This is the great significance of the public service of the sanctuary. It is the whole family of God assembled for His glory and claiming Him as God and Father. You cannot easily allow yourself to be absent from it, for two reasons. You need the assurance that you are a member of the divine household; and your brethren, who have need of the same assurance, must have you there to complete the congregation.

It should be one of your most positive rules that you will not forsake the assembling of yourself with your congregation for worship except for some thoroughly providential reason, which you could not overcome.

Your assembly for public prayer is the most filial act you can enjoy in your relation to God, do not slightly lose the benefit of it, for both yourself and your church.



Music in Worship.

The worship in heaven described to us in the word of God is one of praise and singing, and the words, of angel messengers when they came to earth, are recorded in poetry.

All art is used to express the deeper emotions of the heart in forms which ordinary speech would be unable to do. And, consequently, in the religious life of the world every form of art has been found the hand-maid of the pious, in their adoration of God.

But most of all have Poetry and Music, as combined in the act of singing lent themselves as ready servants to express what is in the heart of man, of praise or joy, in his approaches to the throne of grace. And they serve well the purpose of whole bodies of people using the same words in their addresses to God.

In musical services, as in prayer, there are several forms in which worshipers use them to give expression to the feelings of their hearts. And as these have different purposes, it may be well to treat them separately, observing only that every form of musical composition used in the service of the sanctuary should be addressed to God only, or serve to express the joy that is in us, as in the presence and service of God.

I. The Voluntary.

This is treated first because it is first in the service and also because its place in the service is so much misunderstood. The voluntary is not a march for latecomers, nor a device to fill in time until the people are seated.

When matters are right the whole congregation will be in its place punctually and before the voluntary begins, and the voluntary will, in the hands of a reverent organist, be the opening of the service. It will be played unto the Lord and not to the congregation and will serve to more fully withdraw the worshiper from the world and attune his

heart, as he joins in the voluntary by reverently following it, for the further worship of God.

Or, when the voluntary is played after the benediction, its place is none the less in worship, and when matters are again right the congregation will not use this voluntary as a march out of church. But it will prove again the means of expressing the adoration of the worshiper in grateful acknowledgement of the privilege of worshiping God which he enjoys.

II. The Anthem.

Here again, the composition is addressed to God, not because, as someone once suggested, because nobody else could understand it, but because it serves as the best opportunity of the highest form of poetry and music to express the adoration of the congregation.

In the anthem the choir is not singing to the congregation, but is leading the congregation in the worship of God. And it becomes all the congregation to join in it as much as it joins in the prayer.

If you are a member of the choir, you will particularly remember this and make your utterances so plain that the other members of the church can unite in this service. Nor will you forget that portions of the people are not as musically cultivated as yourself and they need the assistance which the words of your anthem can give them. Of course the words are not the most important part of the anthem. The music of course is what is especially addressed to God, but the help the words can give others will not prevent your worshiping in music and leading the congregation in expressing those emotions which are too deep for words.

Above everything teach both yourselves and others that you as members of choirs sing your anthems unto the Lord.

III. The Offertory.

This as its title suggests is played or sung as a prayer at the offering of Alms and expresses the grateful joy of the worshipers in being permitted to give of their goods to Him who gave all good to His children.

In using selections for offertories too much care cannot be exercised, but in doing so ever bear in mind that your offertory is to lead the congregation in the worshipful act of Almsgiving, and it is in no sense a march for the deacons to keep step by.

IV. The Congregational Singing.

Here music is the means of bringing a whole people to give common expression to a great joy filling them. And every member of the congregation should join in the service.

No thought of discord should deter any member of any congregation from uniting with the brethren in giving expression to the joy in believing.

There are it is true a few who do not understand that music is, in the case of congregational singing, not the object but a means to an end.

The address is to God and every one should sing, whether better or worse, but sing, with heart and voice, the song of praise to God.

The minister has made selection of such a hymn as he believes the congregation should use and all should join in the song.

The Anthem is the opportunity for artistic music but the Hymn is for common use. And if a word were to be said here about tunes it would be to suggest that they should help, and be no obstacle to, the whole congregation in its worship.

The Hymn is for all to sing and you should sing it heartily as unto the Lord. It should always be as before the Lord in words and spirit, and there ought to be no wandering from the hymn; no word of remark; nothing but worship during the time of song.

You will do very much for the praise of God if you will heartily and earnestly give your full energy and reverence to this part of the service in your church.

V. The Doxology.

The doxology is an exultant ascription of praise addressed to the blessed Trinity. It is in place to use doxologies in other places than in singing, as in prayers, addresses, medita-

tion. So also doxologies are sung in especial services of praise, in some churches they are also sung at the conclusion of every hymn.

There are also greater and lesser doxologies. Of the former is the “Gloria in Excelsis” and of the latter is the “Gloria Patri”.

But the doxology at the close of the service is the one to which this note refers. It is sung in the Reformed Church as a fitting acknowledgement of the Holy Trinity at the close of the services just before the benediction. But that does not mean to say that it is put into the service as a convenient opportunity for putting on wraps, hunting hats and making preparation generally to get out.

It means that as the congregation recognises the honor and glory of the blessed Trinity in the work of grace in the human heart, it now also unites in a holy song of grateful adoration to the Triune God. And it should be sung most reverently as becomes such a service.

When the last stanza of the hymn is to be used as a doxology, the last stanza should be

such. It should always be, as stated, an adoration of the Triune God.



Almsgiving.

You will never be able to think of your Almsgiving apart from the worship of God. There is a giving for other reasons than for the glory of God, but, whatever form it may take, such giving cannot be regarded as Alms.

The prayer and the alms of Cornelius came up before God. So the prayers and alms of all true worship continue to ascend, and wherever there occurs a separation of alms from prayers they lose their character — and it does not matter much whether you make this pronoun refer to either alms or prayers.

You can express your absolute selfsurrender, in property and life, to God in no way so well as by giving up to Him in worship some portion of your worldly goods. Only so can you really show that you have power to overcome the world so thoroughly as to be able to get along without its goods. The one who by economy lays up something for the

future shows thereby that he has so far conquered the necessities or luxuries of the present. But they who give of their incomes in the service of God show that they have overcome both the present and the future by their confiding trust in God.

You should, therefore, early in life settle upon a regular and systematic giving in the service of God and that should be according to the privilege which the word of God affords believers as laid down in 2 Cor. ix, 7. It should also be observed that regular and systematic are not synonyms. There may be regularity without order or design, and there may be system without definite regularity. But when we say regular and systematic we mean that in your almsgiving you should have a positive intelligent purpose and plan according to which for the honor of God you will regularly contribute to the maintenance and extension of His kingdom upon earth.

This implies that you will give your full share for the support of your own congregation. You are a sharer in all its benefits and in all honesty, should be a partner in all its

obligations. Your father can no more give for you than he can commune for you.

It also means that you will cultivate an interest in all the educational and charitable institutions of your church, that you will know their location and needs, and be informed of all the missionary and other benevolent operations of your denomination, so as to be able to intelligently make regular offerings for their progress.

Your pleasure in your benevolent work will be very much increased by such a course, and besides you will become a more cheerful giver as you become a more intelligent one. There is very much grudging in giving for which the people ought to be pitied, they only know their money is gone but have no idea where it went any more than if they had lost their pocket books. There is no merit in getting rid of money even for charitable purposes, the merit lies in the intelligent gift given for the glory of God.

How shall you give ? I should say through the organized channels of your church. It

will be more effective that way. Your very best plan would be to make your offering through the treasury of your own congregation. You can always designate the object of your alms, if you desire to do so.

Oh, you say that thus your giving will be known to others, and you quote to me “Let not thy left hand know what the right hand doeth.” And my reply is that even then all your giving will not be known. You will give in ways others cannot know. Besides your Saviour was speaking in the passage quoted against a false giving to be seen of men. The one act of almsgiving which He praised during His life on earth was that of the widow whose gift all the believing world knows.

You need not fear publicity if your motive is a proper one. You will at least escape the temptation of concealing how little you give. A great many have already fallen into this sin of giving less to the Lord because nobody saw them.

How much shall you give? “As the Lord has prospered you.” Many give the

tenth of their income. Some give more and many give less. Here no one can speak for you. It would be as easy to tell how much you should eat, or wear, or read, or pray, as to tell how much you should give.

When you give unto the Lord out of a thankful heart and you have in mind the glory and honor of God, you will have little trouble as to the amount. But you will do well to settle upon a percentage which you call the Lord's portion, and which you will set apart to His use. And like a good steward administer that in the way you prayerfully believe will result in God's greater glory.

Give all that you can without grudging or of necessity remembering that God loveth a cheerful giver. But early learn to give what is your own. It will then, in the truest sense be your gift brought to the altar in love for Him who gave all that was His own for you. Make your offerings as far as possible out of your earnings or out of your own income, or allowances for spending money. This will tend to make the gift wholly your own, and also an entirely free will gift. You will find

that it is a little easier to give what is not your own, but the spiritual benefit of your self mastery will not be as good. When you give of your own you will realize the personal consecration the better.

Finally, so long as you are in debt of course so long you are not fully free to give, but beware that you do not let Satan deceive you, for if your possessions are worth more than your debts, you are not in debt but above it. The debts you have are to be viewed along side of your possessions. Now if you say that your creditors must have their dues, you are saying a good thing until you withhold from God in order to pay man. God's claim upon your gratitude is never any less because you have taken to yourself a larger portion of earthly good than you could easily manage.

But even then you are free to make an offering when beyond your gift you are in any real sense able to meet your obligations.

In all things give as God has prospered you of the earthly good you enjoy as an offering to His praise.

Larger Giving by the Young.

Although these pages are for the young, this subject is yet in place.

There are some objects of benevolence which call for particularly larger giving than the general work of what are commonly regarded as charitable in the work of the Church. These are the educational institutions of the Church and special church building in your home or other congregations or missions.

Somebody ought to give largely, very largely for the Reformed Church. And as you are growing up this thought should go with you. Can you not give a large offering to your Church's work? Why should not you endow a chair in some of our institutions? If not now, why not in the future? And if ever you are to do such a blessed thing now is the time to settle it with yourself and your God that you will in His service do some great thing.

Pray over it and seek to know whether God has not called you to do this very thing.

Many of the very wealthy began life on a poorer scale than you began yours, what shall hinder you from accomplishing greater things than they ?

Only if you mean to do such a thing you should plan it early in life. Consecrate your life to it, and make things bend to that end.

So also, you will sooner or later be confronted with a church to build at home. And the question of how much you should have in the building will have to be settled. And for fear that when that time comes you will say that if you were as able as old Mr. Jones you would do a great deal more than he will, I want you to think about a word or two on the subject.

A poor young person is more able to give largely than a rich old person, who has never learned the joy of benevolence, and for that reason you should learn to give largely to some object early in life.

You take the old Mr. Jones just referred to. He lives in every congregation only his name is not always Jones. And he never gives as much as the other people think he should

give. But he has money and he keeps it for a rainy day that only comes when his money can't buy an umbrella for him to shelter himself.

You think that if you were as rich as he you would do a good deal more than he. Well let us see about it. Are you as old as he ? or as feeble ? Do you have as many dependent on you ?

No, you are young and you have life before you. You have perhaps a little more than our Mr. Brown had when he was your age. You have a little better education than he had. You have in short as good a start as he. Now, let me ask. Do you have less brains than he ? or less industry ? or less will to accomplish something than he had ? If not, then you have as much prospect in life as he had and you have the advantage of his experience. You certainly do not have less love for Christ and His church than he had. You can give as much as he to building your church unless you see that at your age he had a better start than you have. Besides you are going to get more out of your

church than he can possibly get; you will have more years to enjoy it than he. Think about it anyway.

And if you are interested in any other work the same thing might be said. And thus is left with you the question whether God does not mean you to give largely to some work of His, for His own name's sake.



Reading the Bible in Worship.

Did you ever think to ask why the Holy Scriptures are read in worship? You notice that at family prayers and in church service there is always the reading of the Bible. Did you think that this was done to make up your deficiency in private reading of the Word? If so, it will be proper for me to say a word on the subject.

The fact that this reading of scripture is in the midst of the service is significant to suggest that the Bible is not being read to the people, and the length of the selections read is clearly much too short to serve as a means of much instruction. Nor could there

be more for any meditation for immediately the service continues in praise and prayer.

The purpose of this reading of the scriptures in the service is for worship. The word read is memorial. It is read unto the Lord, even as your songs, prayers, and gifts are presented before Him. It is the continual memorial by which we hold up before God His Word, as the assurance of our worship. By so doing we elevate the ground of our communion with God.

His Word is the evidence of His self-revelation to those who have received it, and when Christians meet to worship Him whom this revelation reveals, they read it as a memorial of the hope that is in them, and of the foundation of that hope in Jesus Christ.

Since this word is not read to you, but is your reading to God, it becomes you to read it with the leader of your worship. You should have your bible in your hand as the scriptures are read, and read them with the leader, or when you do not have a bible then you should follow the reading in spirit and recognize that you are reading before God the

evidences of your right to approach Him in worship.

Such a reading of the scriptures will confirm you more fully in the fact of your sonship with the Father since it serves to keep before yourself as well as before God the ground on which your hopes of acceptance rest.

God has come to you, and, because He has come to you and claimed you by revealing Himself unto you, you may come to Him boldly in your approach to the throne of grace.

Therefore, when the word of God is read in public worship and when you read it in your personal devotion, let your whole spirit, and soul, and body revere the word as the sign of the Father's love revealed in Jesus Christ, and hold it up in memorial of the reconciliation wrought in you through the power of that word.

You will see then, that bible reading in worship is a different thing from bible reading for study. By the latter you inform yourself of what God has revealed to you of

Himself and His truth, but by the former you honor God for what He is for you and in you.

Read your bible both ways, and read it much. You cannot know too much of its contents, for on your knowledge of such will depend largely the best use of your bible for reading in worship.

But read it also in worship and thus let your memorial be the promises of God which you read not to learn but to hold up before God as the ground and basis of your hopes and confidence.



The Preaching.

The command of our Saviour to go into all the world and preach His Gospel, is for the whole body of Christians and ought not to be considered as meant for the ministers only, nor should ministers feel that they have obeyed the commission when from Sunday to Sunday they occupy their pulpits expounding the Scriptures for their congregations.

Christians at all times and in all places are to carry the message of salvation in Jesus, name to all people that need the gospel. And this they do both in word and work when their life is as it should be.

But to successfully fulfil their mission Christians need to be strong through the Word and Spirit of God, as these are continually communicated to them by the Holy Ghost in Word and Sacrament. And they who would be strong in the Lord will abide under the shadow of the Almighty in continual worship.

For this, the services of the Sanctuary are very helpful, and the church cannot value them too highly. Among the services of the sanctuary is the act of preaching, which you may not always have regarded as an act of personal worship. You may have allowed yourself to think of it only as if the minister were addressing you, which is true; but in a real sense only half true.

The address from the pulpit is most truly given as before the Lord and means very much more than your pastor's expression of

opinion on certain subjects that may be occupying the public mind.

Your pastor has in mind and in his heart the whole congregation's growth in grace, and recognizes more, perhaps, than any other person in the church, the fact that all growth in grace is from the Word of God, and not from anything he may have to say in explanation of that word.

The personal meditation of the believer upon the word of God is the means of grace, for the scriptures expressly teach that it is both milk for babes and strong meat for them that are of full age. And both are useful when the individual believer takes the word with meekness, and not merely when it is spoken.

This suggests, therefore, the purpose of preaching, namely, to lead the hearer in his meditation upon the word of God. In this view it is easy to see that the minister cannot be expressing his personal notions about the word of God, but that he is engaged in leading the thoughts of his fellow worshipers in considering the word of God in such a way as

to help all to receive the engrafted word which is able to save your soul.

Only, because of his place, as an ordained ambassador of Jesus Christ, he speaks with divine authority and yet that speaking is not in any sense a means of affecting the actions of believers except as the word of God and the Holy Ghost shall move them from within.

Because, also, he makes the word of God his especial study, he will know how to lead your mind more fully into the truth as it is in Jesus. All the explanations he makes, of the passages of scripture he uses as texts, are thus having in mind not merely your intellectual instruction, as if he were a teacher of truth merely, but far more, as he is the leader of your soul, they are made for the purpose of enabling you to follow out in your own thought the word of God as it is applicable to your soul and its wellbeing.

He also seeks to lead you to the way of consecration to God's service. The part of the sermon we often call practical, is not intended to drive you to do as the minister wishes, but has in view the leading of your

will through your meditation to will the things of God. Your pastor is not driving you, no man can drive people into the service of God. The most that can be done is to direct the mind of believers in the truth of God's word in such a way as to help them see in the scriptures what God's will is, and the Holy Spirit will bring the believer into the desire for doing of that will.

You will thus see that the sermon cannot have the entertainment, or amusement, or even the instruction of the mind of believers as its object. It means as much more. For it truly is but the rightly dividing of the word of truth for the congregation that every one may take and use it as before the Lord and to His glory. In the sermon the minister as leader, unfolds the message, and places the truth in shape for each one to use, in his spiritual growth. But the preacher can no more give his hearers the word of God than he can make them believe. Each must for himself receive, and accept it by grace.

Here you get your place in worship during the presentation of the sermon. You follow

where your minister leads you into the truth of the word of God, and you think with him, in meditation, his thoughts as truly as you pray with him his prayer at the throne of grace. You cannot let the preacher preach at you in his sermon. Much less can you let the word of God degenerate into a means of entertaining you a little while after the prayer. And still less can you let it become a piece of ecclesiastical pedagogy for you. No, it means too much of blessing to be a thing of merely the hour. The sermon is your meditation upon the word of God, carried a little further perhaps than you could make it for yourself, and illumined for you to make the truth the easier for you to grasp, but in it all when the act of devotion is what it should be for you, you will be receiving into your spiritual life the word of truth, and be making it your own, as you follow your pastor, and thus it becomes for you the seed of life to bear fruit in pious living.

But even more than that, you will be worshiping God by the respectful and reverent learning of His own revealed word, and thus

you will be receiving that divinely appointed nourishment which shall feed your soul unto everlasting life. The Holy Ghost works faith in your heart by the preaching of the Gospel.

Think these things of the preaching of the Gospel and I am sure you will not lightly refuse to receive the word your pastor has provided either by absenting yourself from the service or by thinking of other and worldly matters when your brethren are thinking of what God is saying in His Word.



The Sacraments.

In the Reformed Church two Sacraments, Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper are recognized as the divinely appointed signs and seals, for the confirmation of the faith in the hearts of believers.

Faith, even when gendered in the heart by the Holy Ghost, needs such a confirmation, as will give the believers that comfort and assurance which God designs. Every one needs to have a means of establishing beyond a doubt, or even the possibility of a-

doubt, the fact of personal participation in the benefits of the gospel. You need to know, for instance, that you are accepted by Christ, as well as to know that you accept His proffers of mercy.

Now, it is this very purpose that the use of the Holy Sacraments is understood to serve. They form the highest form of worship whereby the Holy Ghost confirms in your heart the faith He wrought there by the preaching of the Gospel. They are, consequently, the divinely appointed means of your highest approach to the throne of grace, in which you both worship God and receive at the same time, through the outward and visible signs the seals of your personal acceptance and forgiveness.

For this reason we believe that only God Himself can ordain a Sacrament. You can easily see that no man, or body of men, not even the church as the body of Christ could ordain a sign of God. But when we know that it was our living Saviour Himself, who appointed the Sacraments to seal to you the promises of the Gospel so that you may con-

tinually and steadfastly believe that you receive from Him, for the sake of His sacrifice, forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

It will be important for the sake of your entire peace of mind to understand that the signs and seals are only such. They are holy because they are divinely appointed, but for all that they only represent the heavenly realities, by which you are benefited and built up in your religious life. The grace and help can come only from God. He forgives. He accepts. He saves. He gives eternal redemption and everlasting life. And in order to make you certain of these gifts being truly yours He appoints these unquestionable signs, with which His church, by His own ordaining, seals them unto you.

Further, these blessings in no wise are separable from the promise of the gospel. There is no separation of gospel and sacrament. The latter seals what the former promises unto you. And in the use of word and sacrament together you enjoy the confirmation of your faith unto everlasting life. You cannot hold this truth too firmly. And

so long as you do your grant of assurance will be, not the sign or seal, not the grace of the sacrament, but the person and promise of your faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.

Holy Baptism.

This is the sign of discipleship, the seal of adoption. In this service—for the Sacrament of Holy Baptism is never anything else than an act of worship—the believer is consecrated to his Saviour, and accepted by Him. It is that form of divine service in which believers accept for themselves and for their households the covenant of salvation, and in which the church, in God's stead, seals the fact of such acceptance, and assures and admonishes each one of the fact that the Saviour's sacrifice is for their personal advantage.

It marks the beginning of Christian service. And your baptism is the continual memorial of your membership in the Saviour's kingdom, into which you are planted for His glory as well as for your salvation.

It also serves for the binding of families in the covenant of grace, with Joshua your

father repeats at the baptism of every child: “As for me and my house we will serve the Lord.” And your mother rejoices therein because she recognizes it, as her response to the Saviour’s gracious invitation “Let the little children come unto me and forbid them not for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

In the grace of this sacrament the whole family, parents and children, as the former train the latter in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, is continually united in the truest worship of Him to whom the lives of all have been consecrated.

The Holy Communion.

This sacrament is the sacred assurance of your participation in the Sacrifice of Christ and all His benefits; and in this particular sense it is “the inmost sanctuary of the whole Christian worship.” Here, so far as your life in the church on earth is concerned, you come most completely into full communion with your heavenly Father and into fellowship with your brethren.

This is the fact of love, but not only of God's love to you, as exhibited in the signs of the broken body and shed blood of your Saviour, but also of your love to God in which you approach Him, as His needy child, in the confidence of your trust in the entire sufficiency of the sacrifice you are celebrating. Love and mercy, both offered and accepted, combine to give God greatest glory and yourself divinest pleasure as you come to participate in that sacrament which seals to you fellowship in Jesus Christ and the forgiveness of your sins.

The forgiven sinner is, among men, the most complete manifestation of the glory of God. He is the exhibition not only of the majesty of God, but also of His victory over the world and over Satan, achieved by Jesus Christ. For every one that is forgiven represents the love and power of God to save out of the condemnation, into which sin has plunged man.

It is because of the fact that our catechism says that the Lord's Supper is instituted "for those who are truly sorrowful for their sins,

and yet trust that they are forgiven for the sake of Christ," "and who earnestly desire to have their faith more and more strengthened and their lives more holy." In the consciousness of sins forgiven conjoined with the desire for increased faith and holiness, the communicant, being the very greatest triumph of Christ, acknowledges God's love and bows in pious adoration with others to give God glory and honor and dominion and praise.

You should always therefore welcome the communion occasion and in it lift grateful heart and open hands in sincerest reconsecration to God's service. Never miss a communion. If your sins stand in the way confess them and be forgiven. If you are at enmity forgive and be at peace in the service of your Saviour. Let nothing stand in the way but in the strength and purity which God supplies approach boldly in the name of your redeemer to the throne of grace and signalize in truest worship your sonship with the Father.

Read over the communion service before you go to church and see how in it the whole

life of love is memorialized in order that you may enter into it all with a mind centered on Jesus Christ as the sum of your hopes and the surety of your salvation.

The communion service does not or ought not to begin on the day of its celebration. The time honored custom of connecting a preparatory service with the administration of the Lord's Supper cannot be too highly commended, nor too closely observed. You and your pastor should make it possible for you to always participate in the preparatory service of the congregation. For then your prayers and self-examinations are directed by the order of your church. But this cannot be the whole preparation for keeping the communion. Either beginning with the preparatory service or culminating in it, you will make the personal self-examination which the service suggests, open your heart and life unto the Lord and, in an intelligent knowledge of your life, confess your sins and pray for help. Then will the service from preparation to the final benediction, in all of which every true worshiper will participate, be one

loving act of self humiliation and reconsecration on our part; and on God's, a sealing of adoption and an exaltation in His favor and love. Thus will God be worshiped and real joy thrill your heart in that most true approach into the holiest of all.

Now, as in all the worship of God, the whole congregation should participate in the celebration of the blessed sacraments. This is true of both Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Whenever an occasion necessitates the administration of either in private there is lost the comforting participation of the brethren. And although it sometimes is necessary that one or the other of these must be privately celebrated, it must always be understood that the elders and others present represent the entire congregation. For the vows taken, in baptism, and the communion enjoyed in the Lord's Supper, are shared by the brethren of the church, and it is your duty as such to assist by all your Christian ability to help your brethren keep these vows and increase the joys which are the right of all in the communion or fel-

lowship of the saints. For you are all one in Jesus Christ.



Your Life as an Act of Worship.

Do not think that all your worship can be paid in the church, as if the service of the sanctuary were the occasion when you rendered to God all the things that are God's.

The fact is that in the public service of the sanctuary you are assisted in the worship by your brethren. There is the special promise of the Saviour's presence where two or three are gathered together in His name. Your worship is directed. Your prayers and meditations are led, and in every way the public service of the sanctuary, whilst it is the most real worship of your congregation of which you are a member, is at the same time a helpful agency to inspire your life, develope your graces, and strengthen your whole Christian character.

You need the help which comes from the common worship with others; and God in His church has provided for this need of your

spiritual being, but your whole walk and conversation before God in the world, is a reverent and unceasing act of worship. You glorify God by every act of love you show, by every deed of mercy you do. It will be a most helpful thought for you to think that by your daily life you are worshiping, and adoring God.

This is the real meaning of the Christian life. You are not left in the world as an experiment to see whether you are fit for heaven, but to honor that Father who in His love has begotten you unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Your life from the day of your consecration to the day of your glorification — yea into eternity — is one act of worship by which God is glorified in His saints.

Make this form of your worship as sincere and true as every other, the Christian living will be for you an unending joy and for others a helpful means of grace.

A Few Words about the Church.

The Church.



The Church of our Lord Jesus Christ is the institution which He ordained and commissioned to be the agency and means by which He gathers unto Himself those who are chosen to everlasting life; and for preserving and defending them so long as He may, for His own purposes, keep them in an unfriendly world.

It is the kingdom of heaven established upon earth to exemplify, maintain, and extend the Christian religion among men, who are able to realize the fact of the spiritual life only as they are enabled to see it embodied in believing people.

It is composed of all true believers in Jesus Christ, and is, in the Holy Scriptures, spoken of as the body of Christ of which He is Himself the glorious and ever-living head. By it he carries forward and, so far as fallen

man is concerned, perfects His blessed work of revelation and salvation.

The Saviour, just before His ascension, personally gave the disciples the divine commission to do the work, and, when, at Pentecost, the Comforter came to abide with them forever, He established the Church as the means for carrying out their mission; and as soon as the disciples were, at that time, filled with the Holy Ghost, they immediately through His presence and by His power, began to perform the functions of the Church: that is, they preached the gospel of salvation to the unbelieving world; and they administered the sacraments, baptizing such as received their words, and made disciples of them.

The Church, as you see, is in the world by the act of God and not by that of man; by the communion of Christ and not by the desire of the disciples; by the descent of the Holy Ghost and not by the device of the Church itself. Its purpose in the world is God's purpose and not men's, even though its offices are continually directed to bringing

about men's salvation, for through the Church man is gathered into, and preserved in, the kingdom of God. But it is God Himself who chooses, gathers, preserves, and defends the members of His own kingdom.

You will, consequently, observe that the Church is very much more than an organization of believers who have combined themselves into a common body for the purpose of worship or service; for mutual edification or support; for development or encouragement in the life of grace. And every view of the Church which makes it seem, in the very least, to be less than the divinely appointed and ordained institution of God's own device for continuing the saving work of grace, places the Church in an untrue light. For man could not ordain God's instrumentalities, and the Church is the one by which He continues among men and for men the salvation accomplished by our gracious Redeemer.

Now, as the Church is the kingdom of God among men, it is, in a true sense, the embassage of Christ, to declare to fallen men wherever they may be found, the undying

love of God in Jesus Christ; and to offer in that same love the full benefits of this kingdom to all who will accept the sovereignty and submit to the saving of its gracious Master and loving Saviour. In this embassage every member has his personal part and is fully privileged to make the declaration and proclaim the tidings. The sole purpose of all this work is to call men out of the kingdom of this world into the kingdom of heaven.

The preaching of the gospel both from the pulpit and in the life of the believer is the continual declaration of the purpose of God respecting the salvation of the lost. Every earnest word, every pious life, every benevolent act combines to declare that God has power to save from the world and from sin, and in this sense becomes a form of preaching and constitutes a most positive testimony of the grace of God, as being able to triumph over the power of satan. The embodied life of grace in the Church is an unceasing call to the sons of sin, showing where deliverance may be found in submitting to the sovereign-

ty of Christ who always frees man from the bondage of iniquity and the fetters of sin.

But the whole work of the Church comprehends also, as already suggested, the gathering of them that God has called by the gospel into the fellowship of the kingdom. The Church is not only the exhibition of God's power but also the dispenser of His favor. It is the means by which God gathers His own out of the world and unites them in one common bond of life in a living relation to the kingdom, and to the person of His son. Here He endows them with His own divine gifts, and makes them also ambassadors, citizens, sons, to call and win out of the world unto Himself others still, whereby the kingdom is extended and spread abroad in all the world and men are brought to the knowledge of God and His salvation, and invited to share its benefit and enjoy its peace.

All ages, past and future, share the same blessed life of Christ through the Church as do you, and this life is expressed in your holy religion, which you live both for the glory of God and the salvation of your fellow

men. Here all believers unite in one fellowship, the fellowship of service in their Saviour's kingdom. Every believer is in the world to continue it, and this will explain why the Church finds the world so unfriendly and inimical.

Neither satan nor the world would find any objection to the moral life of the Church, if it were not for the fact that the Church is continually proclaiming the salvation of men in the kingdom of God. And the fact that the church is ever being driven, by the world forces, from one end of the world to the other, in both bodily and spiritual persecution, means very much more than the mere testing of your spiritual progress. God in Christ, leaves you in a dangerous world only because your Christianity is the only way by which others can be gathered unto Himself. Do not look upon your Christian life as a probation. There is no such thing as a probation in the sense of trial to determine whether you are saved or not. Jesus does not gather you into His Church and keep you in the world to see whether the Holy Ghost had not

perhaps imperfectly regenerated you; or to learn just where your spiritual life needed a little touching up to finish it. No, God knows, as the Saviour showed in His last talk with His disciples, that this is a world that hates the Church, and will hate it so long as it continues to do the Saviour's work, and He leaves the Church in the midst of spiritual danger only that it may call and save others from the bondage of this world. But even this He has provided for, and He takes care of His Church defending and preserving it in the very midst of the unfriendly world. So then, you are called to make manifest God's full power to defend and preserve you from all your spiritual foes, in order that sinners may learn from your safety where safety is to be sought and found.

Your Saviour did not leave you in this world to be tried by Satan and to give him an opportunity to win you back to his dark domain of selfishness and sin, but you are here to declare by your purity and life that your Saviour has power to deliver even the most sorely tempted. Neither is your Christian

life on earth a means by which you are to prove your love to God. God knows His own and His perfect work, and no proof is needed to show Him whether you are His own or not. Your life lived in the danger of temptation and trial is for a very different purpose. You are the witnesses for God and Christ, to save the lost from the dangers to which you are exposed by your service for them.

Christians are in the world as revealers of God to the fallen, to testify the completeness of the triumph grace has won in them, and to declare it to others; and thus the opposition of the world power is aroused against the believers — the Church. And it is for this reason also that the Saviour preserves and defends His own in His Church, as He has promised the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.

The Church, therefore, by being the means of preserving and defending the members who are carrying forward among men the work of Christ, is continually the witness of the sovereignty of the Saviour over Satan. And it is for everyone, whom Jesus has called

into this blessed kingdom, a continual assurance of the reality of that grace in which you stand. You belong to Him in body and soul, and you are members of His kingdom both saved and safe — both saving others and testifying to the fulness of His salvation. And even when you wrestle in common with all christians against principalities and powers of darkness you know that you cannot fail, for the cause of Jesus cannot be overthrown, and thus the Church stands as an everlasting refuge and sure defense both for yourself and all whom you may be able to win into the fellowship of the kingdom of God, and not only for these, but for all whom God has chosen and called from darkness to light through His glorious Gospel.

The Church is thus both your defense and opportunity in Christ. In it you are saved and, at the same time, both witness and testify to His power to save and to defend all them that trust in Him.

And now finally, you will, of course, meet with the question of salvation without the Church. Whether salvation might, in God's

great love, be possible in some other way would be hard to say by one who believes that with God all things are possible. But that is not the important question. It is not whether some other means might be possible. This one has been revealed as the way God has pointed out. Whether there may be another way or not, this one is revealed to you as sure. How foolish it would be when a storm is coming, and a place of shelter offered to discuss whether there might be another one somewhere. Or how wrong it would be, if we were in a strange country and the way to the place we sought were pointed out, to inquire whether some other way might not possibly be open. This one is the way—so much is sure and the wise will walk therein.

There might perhaps be another way, but the Church is God's way, the one He has chosen to reveal to man and you will be wise to declare your trust in God by accepting the means He has ordained and cling to them until you find another revealed means of salvation.

Certain it is that the knowledge of salva-

tion is through the Church; the Sacraments are administered by the Church only; the spirit abides in the Church; and the means of life which God has declared may well be accepted as the best way by which God can do His work among men for their best weal for life and death.



The Denomination of the Church.

We believe in One Holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church, but we see a very great number of differing and at times opposing organizations which are called churches.

It requires an act of faith to apprehend the unity of the Church of Jesus Christ for it is apparently denied by the senses and by the reason. The names, the customs, the doctrines of these churches are so greatly diverse that it is impossible for the mind to realize that the whole body of these, varying and often antagonizing organizations, can possibly constitute a single, united real body of Christ: The Holy Catholic Church.

It is only when we believe the revelation of God and apprehend the existence of the many denominations of christendom in the light of that revelation, that we can at all comprehend that, in spite of all the divergences in teaching, practice, organization, and worship of the Church on earth, the Holy Catholic Church of Christ is one, and only one.

When we, however, believe in the infinite truth of God and its endless adaptation to every spiritual need of the whole human race we occupy a ground from which it is possible not only to see that the Church is one but to rejoice in the blessed fact that the powers of God are not shortened by the limitations of the instrumentalities He is using for the revelation of Himself to fallen man, and for the salvation of the lost race.

The truth to be taught for instance is infinite, for it is the revelation of God; and the ability to teach it is finite, as is also the ability to learn, for these are human. None can hold or teach the infinite truth except as it is received and expressed by the limited, finite ability of men. Now as these vary so

will the apprehension of the truth differ. All accept it as true the one revelation of God, but each has understood that revelation according his own powers, and, with different application as well as with differing powers of comprehension. And the real unity of these apparently differing doctrines can become fully apparent only as by faith we apprehend that in Jesus Christ is the full harmony of all these divergences; that He is the sun of all doctrine; that He is the unity of all expressions of the truth.

To faith, therefore, each true denomination is the expression of some phase of the truth not expressed by the others, and instead of militating against one another they complement one another; for faith accepts the unity of the Church in the person of Christ even though the denominations differ in particular forms of expressing religious truth. In this sense the denominations are one and only one.

There is also another important factor to be considered in thinking upon the unity of the Church, and that is the fact that the gospel

is sent to all men, to every nation, to every nature. The Church has, it is true, but one gospel, but it is sent out into a world of endlessly differing needs. People in one country are not endowed with the same powers as those in another. Environment is very far from alike in the many countries, and climates, and communities of this world; and consequently, the humanity to be saved, scattered as it is all over the earth, and endowed with a peculiar environment, as well as with varying capacity for receiving the revelation of God as touching salvation, will vary very much in its application of the truth to each peculiar need in individual lives.

Now if you will but add to your consideration one more fact viz: That people living under the same surrounding; enjoying the same powers; blessed with like gifts; nevertheless, often vary in their apprehensions and applications of what is best for them, you will see at least the likelihood of many interpretations of any one message sent into the world, and an even greatly increased variation in the application of the truth received

to the immediate needs and requirements of any one organization as related to others.

These varying conditions have given rise to the many differing denominations of christianity. They have not divided the Church but they have multiplied the forms in which the Church approaches men with the gospel and for their salvation, and, when properly understood, this fact will strengthen our faith in the real unity of the Church of Jesus Christ in the face of its apparent diversities.

You will, of course, not expect that each organization was entered into with this fact in mind. Generally it was not recognized. The originators could not be said to have been conscious of any desire to become instrumental in a farther or fuller application of the truth as revealed in Christ. Generally indeed each felt that the others were wrong, and at times the most unholy motives moved men in their work, but God overruled all the efforts and wrath of man for His glory in the salvation of men and for the fuller expression of the truth of God. And in consequence we are able to see in the many denominations of

Christianity a fuller embodiment of our religion than would otherwise be possible with men. The truth of God is more fully expressed, and received, and taught, and applied to the needs of our race for salvation and righteousness, than could be expected from any one body of christian people.

If it had been possible for any one mind to grasp and express the whole truth, or if men generally had been enable to receive and teach it, there might have possibly been some one proper embodiment of christian truth and doctrine. But with that condition we are not confronted. We find the world as it is, and you see the Church of Christ apparently greatly divided, and you are members of one denomination among the many. The question of your church's right to a place in the kingdom of God may arise in your mind and it will prove to you a great blessing if by the grace of your heavenly Father, you will be able to believe that the Church of all ages, kindred, peoples is one, and that through your own denomination you are a living member of the Church of the living God.

Like any other mystery in the revelation of God this one does not need to be understood, and when by faith you can really believe that revelation which speaks of the Church as one, as the body of Christ having members differing from one another as much as hands do from eyes and yet truly members one of another, you will be able to enjoy as you should the comfortable assurance, that however much others may differ from and even denounce your church, you are nevertheless members of Christ and of one another for the accomplishment of His great work in the world.

Then you will be able to realize that all the denominations of the Holy Catholic Church unite in preaching one gospel to the lost: that they all accept our Saviour as the only revealer of the Father and the only redeemer of human kind; that they all agree in true faith in Him; that they all live one spiritual life and enjoy one common communion with God in Christ. You will also see that the whole Church, though composed of so many members, fights faithfully against one single

enemy; battles for one common truth; and hopefully moves in the one fellowship of the communion of saints, through the toils and labors of this earthly pilgrimage, towards one heavenly home and one common rest.

The Holy Catholic Church of Jesus Christ, whatever it may seem to be is, despite all its differences in creed or cultus, one and only one, the body of Christ, in which and through which by His word and spirit, He carries forward His work of grace among men. Each denomination in it has been called into existence in the development of history, to be the bearer of some particular message of God. And, however much our untrained ears may perceive only a confusion of voices, altogether they make one revelation of God concerning the redemption of men through Jesus Christ.

Each denomination, also, is the expression of some principle and stands for some definite purpose and work, differing from every other, in many particulars of doctrine, cultus, organization, practice. And yet taken altogether the denominations of the Church express more and more fully the one purposes of the life of

grace as adapted to the needs of the whole race of mankind. And whilst it is true that no one denomination could, exclusively, be the Holy Catholic Church, they all inclusively constitute it for this world, and each is most true to God who has called it into His service in proportion as it is most loyal to the work God has given it to do.

In this light, and it is wholly scriptural, there is no unnecessary division of the Church of Christ, by the denominations of Christendom. The Church is not divided, and your constant prayer will be that all believers, whatever may seem to separate them, may by the presence and power of the Holy Ghost be led to see that they are all one in Him who is Head over all to His body the Church.

Finally, each denomination can learn, from the historical forces that called it into existence, what it stands for and what it is to teach and practice among men, and it becomes every member of the Church to know the history that gave it being, not only for the comfort such knowledge will afford but also for the intelligent carrying out of the

purposes of its life. This whole discussion assumes that each part of the body of Christ has its peculiar office and work, and there could be no necessity for a separate existence of a denomination which had not its particular work to do in the revelation of the truth and the salvation of the lost.



Our own Denomination.

The Reformed Church in the United States is really only a part of our denomination, and that part of it which is organized within the limits of the United States.

The denomination, as a whole has a history running back to the Reformation of the sixteenth century when God reformed His Church and made it conform more fully to its purpose in the world of declaring the whole gospel and calling the whole race into the salvation which is in Christ.

But is not exactly correct to say that our Church began in that reformation. Our name suggests that the Reformed Church had an unreformed state or condition, and that is

the truth. We recognize the fact that in this great religious revolution it came to pass that our separate organization was effected, but when it is remembered that the congregations were not reorganized, that they were not started anew, but that by communities the whole congregations and churches, as such, went bodily into the Reformed movement, one could hardly say that our Church began in the Reformation.

None of the reformers ever thought of undertaking to start a new Church. All their efforts were directed to calling attention to the errors and abuses in the Church, with the expectation that the Church should correct the wrongs and throw off the evils which had grown out of the conditions belonging to the Church prior to the reformation, and seemed to make it necessary.

You should, also, understand that the reformers of the reformation period, were by no means the first to recognize the errors or the first to undertake the correction of the abuses which were growing in the customs of the established Church.

For years, I may say for centuries, from the very middle ages of religious history, earnest minded men saw and were making most strenuous efforts to reform the abuses in the practices of the Church. And these men were not confined to any one country. Many nations, as well as many ages witnessed the work of these men, whom history recognizes as the reformers before the Reformation.

During all the preceding ages, and in the Reformation period itself there was but one purpose in the minds of the reformers and that was to deliver the Church from the bondage of her own wrongs. They all saw that the errors against which they protested were contrary to the word of God, and fearfully destructive to true piety. And as honest and fearless servants of God they made a Christian endeavor to reform the Church into harmony with the revealed word of God, as they were led to understand it.

True they succeeded only in part, but the Reformation of the sixteenth century reformed the Church to a greater or lesser ex-

tent in Germany; in Switzerland; in France; in the Netherlands; in Bohemia; in Hungary; in Poland; in Scandinavia; in England; in Scotland. Of these countries, it cannot be said that the whole Church was reformed. The great body of the Church remained unreformed, but it is not exactly proper to permit the contention to stand that to the great unreformed body belongs all the inheritance of the history of the Church, and the Churches of the Reformation period be regarded as having made a new beginning in the sixteenth century.

In the Reformation of the sixteenth century God reformed His Church, He was not remaking it nor starting it anew ; there was the awakening of the pious life in the Church and with the reformers, as His instruments, He quickened the zeal and love for the truth as it is in Jesus, and so gave to fallen mankind a new power to seek and help it ; and that was the Church Reformed. Not simply corrected of its abuses but reformed in its very life. The Reformed Church is vastly more than the Church of Rome freed from

its errors, for it stands for another element in the revelation of God through His Church.

Up to the Reformation period the life of the Church was expressive of authority; and this authority was continually becoming more positively combined in one head. The developement was one sided for it was unable to recognize the freedom of the believer in Christ. The Church authority expressed itself at the cost of what may be called evangelical freedom, and as a result the Church really assumed control of the thought and conscience of its members and thus suppressed the liberty of the children of God.

Out of this condition grew every error in the dark days of the life of the Church preceding the reformation. The governing head of the Church continually went farther away from the freedom of the word of God, and brought the membership into still deeper bondage. And the reformation with which God reformed His Church did more than correct the abuses which were a sort of symptom of the false condition in the life of the Church. By it He reformed the life of the Church so

as to make the Reformed Church become the embodiment of the principle of freedom, evangelical freedom in the Church on earth.

This explains why the reformation Church cry was a free Church in a free state. A pope might perhaps have arisen who in his greatness might have stopped the sale of indulgences, or who could have prevented the worship of relics; or who could have stemmed the selfish tide which was overwhelming the Church, but no pope could ever have made the great hierarchy of which he was the head become a free Church. It required the Church to be reformed into another form of being and government, and that required the religious upheaval through which the Church of the Reformation was carried into a greater prominence than the reformers dreamed of.

Now in the expression of this freedom each nationality in the period of the reformation, was effected by its own peculiarities and every country came to express a different type of religious life and some even showed two or three such types, that is, the Gospel under

the impulse of freedom proved itself applicable to all the differing conditions of life.

In this way originated all the peculiarities of the Reformation Churches, and since you are thinking particularly of your own denomination at this time I am sure that you will rejoice in the fact that, whilst other reformation organizations have been called after their leaders, organization, peculiarities, yours has been honored with a name which stands for the great contention which recalls our historical necessity. The Reformed Church, as a name, suggests that the denomination did not begin with its separate organization, but that it is the Reformed portion of the Church of all ages, which, when it departed from the word of God in principal or practice, God Himself reformed, by the processes of history, to be the renewed, purified, and, at the same time, broadened institution which He planted in the world to bear fruit in His service.

There was a historic necessity for our organization as a denomination, and the lines by which we were led into life as such, also

point out the purpose for which we are now in the world.

We stand for evangelical freedom, self government, which is the most real liberty ; not as denying authority, but as being brought into such harmony with the divine law as makes most free those who most obey.

Now in order to thus be free, a certain knowledge of the requirements of the life, to which we belong, is needed, and consequently our Church stands of necessity for the instruction of the young, in the doctrines and customs of our holy religion. We believe in an educational religion to the end that our service may be an intelligent one, and this fact grows out of the history of the Church.

But this instruction can only be from the word of God, which received by faith, is the only recognized authority in our Church. All our standards are tried by it and that only regarded true which comes from it as its source.

From this comes our most fundamental truth that we are not our own but belong to our Saviour Jesus Christ which is really the

ground principle on which our denomination rests among the Churches.

In Christ to whom we belong we are free, and, governed by His word and spirit, are taught by Him of the Father and the revelation by which we know Him. Here all believers are one and equal by enjoying that liberty wherewith the Son has made us free



Our Catechism.

True denominations of the Church of Christ upon earth have systems of doctrines which they teach as the expression of what they believe to be the teaching of the Gospel.

These systems are generally embodied in confessions or catechisms, which represent, therefore, the doctrinal unity of the denomination teaching them.

A few pretend to have no confession to teach but the Bible, but their claim is often only a form of self deception, and churches making it, would themselves, most positively, resent the charge that they taught no one common doctrine in their congregations.

These standards of faith are expressions of what the whole denomination accepts and teaches as the doctrines of the Bible and, as such, they represent the doctrinal unity of the Church which sets them forth.

Early in the history of our denomination, as a separate organization, the Heidelberg Catechism was prepared, which serves in our church the double purpose of our confession of faith, and the text book for the religious instruction of the growing youth of the Church.

The Heidelberg Catechism takes its name from Heidelberg, the city where it was written and published. This city was the Capital of the Electoral Palatinate, and the seat of the great University bearing its name.

Our Catachism was prepared under the direction and help of Frederick III, commonly called the pious, who was the first German prince to adopt the distinctively Reformed principles. The Reformed creed as distinct from the Lutheran, was the creed of the common people, perhaps, because the movement

belonged particularly to Switzerland were there were no princes.

Heidelberg, as an educational center not having positively declared itself as between the Reformed and Lutheran theories in the Reformation movement, early became the center, also, of very violent disputation on the subjects about which the reformers differed. Each side sought to commit the university to its view and so acquire additional facility for propagating its doctrines. The discussions spread, and when Frederick became elector of the Palatinate he found his province very greatly involved in violent controversy and the University at his capital city, filled with angry and selfish disputations.

Possessed of a noble pious heart, the elector set himself to the work of reconciliation between the antagonistic leaders, but was unable to accomplish anything, and finally dismissed both sets of extremists and endeavored to establish a lasting peace, at least in his dominions, by having published a catechism for the religious instruction of the youth of his country. This was the Heidelberg Catechism,

and the most scandalous feud, of the intensely zealous reformation age, became the occasion for the production of the most irenic confession of that whole period.

With the definite determination of providing a standard which would bring peace to his people, Frederick sought for the workmen, who were to lay the foundations for the religious education of the nation. He sought not among the men who had been in the midst of the controversy. He turned not to the great men who had been in the midst of the dispute and who had gotten glory in it. He went a generation farther and sought among the younger men for those whom he charged with the work. So he avoided the men who had been so disastrously arrayed against one another, and was enabled to have produced our standard whose object was to make peace without a victory over another to be boasted about.

But in those days all men had convictions. In the great enthusiasm of that time every man was bold to have and to express them, and when Frederick sought for men who had

no wounds to show, and no victories to boast, he was really—shall we say providentially—driven into the company of the younger men in his intellectual kingdom. There he found the young giants, God had prepared to do this great work, in the persons of Zacharias Ursinus and Casper Olevianus, who were so inspired for this task that they were able to produce our undying Catechism at the ages of 26 and 28 years respectively.

The former had been a pupil of Melanchthon and the latter of Calvin and both are said to have imbibed the spirit of their teachers to such an extent that of their work it has been truly said “The Heidelberg Catechism exhibits the harmonious union of the Calvinistic and Melanchthonian spirit. It is the ripe fruit of the whole Reformation and the true heir of the treasure gathered not in ten years, but in the entire period. It is thoroughly Biblical and represents its particular denominational type with great wisdom and moderation. We feel from beginning to end in the clear and expressive word the warm and sound pulse of a heart that was baptized

by the fire and spirit from above, and knows what it believes."

It stands as a masterpiece among Catechisms of the reformation period and is singularly free from the evidences of the acrimonious controversies of the age in which it was prepared. Of all the confessional symbols this one is preeminent as being permeated with a peaceful devotional spirit; and it enjoys the unique distinction of being the only denominational standard to receive the formal approval of the highest judicatory of a denomination other than the one for which it was prepared, for the General assembly of the Presbyterian Church at its meeting in 1870 authorized the use of the Heidelberg Catechism in its congregations.

Besides this endorsement, so lately given, our Catechism enjoys the very acceptable distinction of being adopted by the churches of Hungary, Poland, Transylvania and the Netherland and has therefore authority in practically four European and three American denominations in Christendom.

It is also far more generally translated than any other confession. It is used in every European and in several Asiatic and African languages, and Dr. Philip Schaff, in his Creeds of Christendom, says that only three books "The Holy Bible", "The Imitation of Christ" and "The Pilgrims Progress" have been more frequently translated than the Heidelberg Catechism.

The first question and answer sounds the keynote of the whole production, and characterizes the whole Catechism as representing our Christianity in a comforting devotional aspect. The authority that commands is overshadowed by the regenerate desire and will to live unto God. And the ground of all hope lies in the fact of God's loving relation to such as belong to Jesus Christ in body and soul.

It will be a profitable exercise, devotionally speaking, to regularly and prayerfully read the questions and answers of this great work, which is a product of religious enthusiasm tempered by sound reason and excellent judgment. It is adapted to youth and edu-

cation, but no less to maturer years and edification.

The plan followed in its arrangement is that of the Epistle to the Romans. The first question and answer are the general statement of the Gospel as related to the christian hope and comfort, and the second question outlines the arrangement of the Catechism in its three-fold division printing out the things necessary for a christian to know in order to enjoy fully the comfort of the Gospel. Knowing these things does not constitute the christian's comfort, but it contributes to the enjoyment of the comfort which every believer has as belonging to his Saviour.

You will be greatly helped in all your study of the Catechism if you will keep in mind the division in which the subject treated is found, for that will indicate whether you are to understand it to belong to the things that show your misery, or to the means by which you come to have deliverance, or to the manner in which you show your gratitude to God for the deliverance you enjoy. In this way you will learn to know the Decalogue, the

creed, the Sacraments, the Lord's Prayer in their proper relation to one another; and you will understand regeneration, faith, conversion, godly living as these are related to your christian life.

Whenever you turn to the Catechism, thank God for this great legacy and endeavor by a complete familiarity with it, to become thoroughly conversant with the light of the everlasting Gospel to the end that you may in this blessed life live and die happy.



Our Church Organization.

One of the great principles of the Reformation was that all true believers, being members of Christ, and partaking of His anointing, are equally, with each other, prophets, priests, and kings; that no one, whatever position he might occupy, in God's service could either lord it over God's heritage or be the necessary mediator between God and His people.

The recognition of this principle will explain how it occurred that nearly all the

churches of the period of the Reformation, were organized upon a system the opposite of the hierarchical, under which all the authority of the Church was exercised by the priesthood, as a central head, and which, as the absolutely necessary mediators between God and the believer, in all things spiritual, exercised its authority in such a way as made it both the keepers of the conscience of the Church and the dispenser of the goodness and mercy of God.

The Reformed Church, in its organization, is an exemplification of this principle, and expresses, in the relation of the officers and members of the Church to one another, the idea of individual equality of believers and of personal responsibility for the whole work and progress of the affairs of the Church. Every member enjoys the full privilege, and has the unquestioned right, and shares the common duty, of personally studying and knowing God's word and its requirements. And upon the theory that the regenerate children of God, in His Church fail in none of those things, and upon the conviction that,

consequently, they will thus be fitted to properly participate in the government and affairs of the Church, every member of every congregation is regarded as personally responsible for the conduct and progress of all the work and business of the congregation.

Before entering upon the consideration of the offices and organization of the Church in detail you should first of all stop to think what this principle means, as far as it has to do with your own life in relation to the Church of which you are a member. The whole institution, in its permanency and efficiency for doing its full part in the work of God among men, depends upon the individual members fully recognizing the principle and carrying it out in regular practice. No question can come before the Church which is not of personal interest to every member, and, it becomes you, therefore, to be ready to take your individual part in deciding every such matter when it comes up. There can be no true equality otherwise, and this is what the great contention for the Word of God in the vernacular, and the Bible in the

hands of all the people means. The reformers did not mean to make the Book an object of worship. But they did mean, in the inspiration of the great reformation principle of the equality of believers, to put the means, by which every such one could be fitted for his place and responsibility, wholly within his reach.

Now, you can easily discern the importance of full familiarity with the Word of God, as your guide and helper, as the necessary consequence of this principle, namely, that all believers, being equal, must also be free, that is, self-governed. No one can govern himself who is unfamiliar with the obligations resting upon him. And the true study of God's Word for every member of the Church, is meant to help him see what the will of God, concerning his redemption and mission in the world, is. Only so, can the real character of the Church be manifest to the world, and it is always to be regretted, when its members so far fall back into the practice of the prereformation period, as to allow others study all the Word, and settle

all questions of right and duty, for them. You can see how such a course denies the whole contention of the reformer, viz: that the Church wants the Word.

So if you mean to be true to the life of your Church you will continually endeavor by prayerful study of God's Holy Word to learn your place and work, as directed by the Holy Ghost, and thus be enabled to perform your every duty as a member of the Church intelligently, in the light of God's revelation of His will, concerning the redemption of the world.

You are not left to wrestle with the great problem without assistance. The standards of the Church point the way to your correct understanding of the word, and the constitution of the Church guides you on the path of practice. When you first undertake this profitable study you will notice that there are no rules governing your conduct, in the Constitution or Catechism of our Church except as in direct reference to the Word of God. But this is in entire keeping with the principle of the Reformation already referred

to, and tends to develope the ability of responsible decision. The equal, and the free, cannot let others decide the right and wrong of their actions, and they would not if they could. It is under the conviction of this principle that you will best understand the organization of your Church.

Now, if any one should be tempted to say, as has often been suggested, that you are unequal to this responsibility, I can only say that such is the contention of the papacy, and, if it were true, the struggle of the reformation was based on a wrong principle. But a greater than any earthly teacher has assured you that the Holy Ghost will guide you into the truth, and underlying every epistle of the new Testament, through which the Church is instructed, is the assurance that the Word of God does develope, in them that receive it, the life of grace. And it becomes you as a child of God, trusting Him for that help He has promised in His Church, to grow in His grace unto that perfect man, that full grown man, spoken of in the Word of God. For what is promised is not impos-

sible with God, and it becomes you as a true member of His kingdom to know His word and continually govern your life directly by its precepts.

After these general remarks on the Organization of our Church I should like you to look upon that organization in closer detail, but in the light of this principle.

In the affairs of every congregation every member is supposed to have a voice. The few exceptional cases, where distinction of age and sex are made to restrict the voice or vote of the membership, do not break, but establish the rule to which they are the exception. Everything of such a character as could be transacted by the whole congregation is always submitted to it, and such matters, as are not so submitted are attended to by the Consistory which is wholly representative, since every member of it has been chosen by the vote of the members. Neither pastor, elder, nor deacon, can be ordained or installed in any congregation except upon the declared voice of the members at an election at which every member shall have had,

at least, the opportunity of giving his vote.

The officers of the congregations compose the bodies which represent each congregation in the management and control of all things temporal and spiritual arising in the life of the congregation, and they also are the body on which the whole structure of the government of the whole Church rests. For they, and they only, elect the delegates which constitute the Classis, which is the authoritative unit in our Church organization. It will always be a good thing for you to keep in mind the signification of these offices.

Ministers.

These are members of the Church who have been by their ordination set apart to the work of instruction and discipline of the Church. We recognize two kinds of elders, who differ, however, in no very important particular. The Minister is an Elder who gives himself particularly to the work of teaching and leading, and by his relation to the Classis, sustains a somewhat especially

authoritative relation as head of the congregation, and is therefore entitled to receive your prayerful and loyal support; and also, because of his entire consecration to your spiritual welfare, deserves your most devoted allegiance. He gives his life wholly to your congregation and is constant in his prayers and efforts for its continual progress in the Lord. He studies your needs and, in meditations upon the Word of God, seeks to apply it for your spiritual good, and you will do well to make him your friend and speak with him frequently about the welfare of your soul. He knows the general work of the Church, and directs you to your part in it, and seeks by all his powers to develope you in the christian life, and is responsible to God in His Church for your growth in grace. The office of minister itself which is not higher than that of the other elders, and possesses no more authority in the government of the Church, is, nevertheless, more particularly concerned with the general life of the whole Church, as well as that of your own congregation. He is charged with the

devotions of the people; and the outward unity of the Church in doctrine or practice depends largely upon the minister. For the sake of this unity the services of the Church, the administration of the Sacraments, and the performance of the rites of the Church, are ordinarily left to them, not as an exclusive right, but as an orderly ordinance.

The Church, continually in need of such servants of God, has provided for the education of Ministers of the Gospel in regularly established theological seminaries, which are conducted directly under the care and direction of Synods, and as you read these lines, will you not search your heart and prayerfully inquire whether God is not calling you to enter upon a course of training which shall fit you for this blessed service ?

Elders.

Our Church uses no particular designation as between the two classes of elders. We usually speak of ministers and elders, and with this form of distinction in mind, I want you to think very highly of the office of

elder, in your congregation. For to these faithful men, set apart for the especial service of God in your congregation, is committed the very highest possible trust among men. And before your attention is called to their work in the congregation itself, you should think of this office in respect to its meaning in the Church at large. For, besides watching over their congregation, the elders are also to guard the doctrine and defend the Sacraments. And this means very much more than is generally supposed.

You will bear in mind that the authoritative head of the Reformed Church does not lie in her minister, but in the classis in which the membership of every congregation is represented by these elders, and every year when the Classis enquires into the conduct of the Lord's work by His servants, the elders are asked whether the doctrines of the gospel are preached in their congregations in its purity, and whether the unworthy are warned from the communion. The high character of this office is evident from this fact, for it makes

prominent the guardianship these officers are to exercise every word and sacrament.

There are those who think slightly of these questions at the annual meetings of Classis, and who even favor taking them out of the required reports of the eldership, on the ground that elders are not competent to sit in judgment upon the character of the minister's preaching, and conduct of his office. But, to say nothing about such a reflection upon the men who fill the office of elder, except that the statement, if true, should send them to their bibles and their knees that God may enlighten them for the high and holy place they occupy in His service, it ought to be suggested that, if the Elders of the Church guard not the word and sacrament, there is left no authority to do so and the Minister who preaches the word and administers the sacrament becomes the absolute head of his own congregation in such a sense as would be entirely out of harmony with a Church, which cannot accept the dogma of infallibility in one pope, and much less in that of a whole ministry.

But so long as the questions are asked so long does the reformed idea, of the office of elder in it, demand that this trust be exercised as the expression of the desire for an unmixed word and an unsullied sacrament. And there can be no departure from this position without the violation of the very integrity of the principle governing the life of the Church.

In harmony with this defense of word and sacrament comes every other duty of the elder. The oversight of the congregation; the discipline of the keys, opening and closing the kingdom of God, by admitting members to or excluding them from the communion of the Church; the visitation of the sick; the admonition of the unruly; the vigilance they are to practice to promote peace and the spiritual welfare in the congregation; and all such other duties as are set forth in the Directory of Worship as being the express duty of elders, all may be related to one another in the conception of the office of elders as being the representative, chosen, ordained head of his congregation who watches

over his charge as God's own servant set apart to this work.

This view will bring out the other character of the elder's work as being helpful rather than critical. He views the spiritual life of the flock not as a judge to pass censure upon the bad, but as a father to develope the good, and to help you correct the wrong whenever he finds you endangered by it.

The elder in either office cannot serve for you. They may pray for your growth in grace for you and with you, but your personal part cannot be performed by them. They may point out the wrong, but you must leave it. They may show you the right way, but you must walk in it. Consequently it must be borne in mind that even faithful elders cannot make the christian life of any people. But because they are so near to that life, they will zealously guard it, and seek by all spiritual help to further it.

To help the elder in the assurance of serving because elders are but men even though ordained and set apart by God to render such exalted service, our organization provides for

a number of elders in every congregation who in the capacity of a spiritual council consider and determine upon the spiritual work of the congregation, and each elder is supported by the consciousness of the fact that not upon his one judgment, but upon that of the whole body, is based the conclusion of the matter.

The office can not be magnified too highly, and if God calls you to His service in this office try to realize the conception of elder as coming down to you historically, through the life of Reformation of the sixteenth Century, from the earliest days of the Church.

Deacons.

The office of deacon is another branch of the christian ministry in every congregation of the Reformed Church. You will observe that this sentence does not say a lower, but another branch of the ministry. There are churches in which the office of deacon is regarded as a lower order than that of priest, in the ministerial office.

But following strictly the signification of the office as given when the first deacons

were set apart, as recorded Acts vi: 1-8., our Church regards this office, whilst having to do with outward and material things, as none the less a proper and equal branch of the ministry of the Gospel, with duties which find their full and final purpose in the salvation of men in the world to come.

The notion of the lower character of this office grows out of the mistaken opinion that material things are, in the service of God of lower degree than things spiritual. But if you will only think that it is to make spiritual use of the material things that the office of deacon exercises its gifts, you will easily see that the Church designates it properly as a proper branch of the ministry.

In very fact the office of deacon intended to further the work of the Gospel by guarding and directing the alms giving of the congregation. All the outward affairs of the household of faith are their care, and among these is the necessary work of looking after the support of the pastor, the provision for the comfort of the Church, the payment of bills, and much that really the congregation

ought to look after as a body of honest people. But the deacon who believes that the whole of his duty is done when the janitor and minister, and others, who have claims in the congregation, are paid, will need to read over the service of his ordination and installation.

The deacon is the officer who has charge of the poor in the congregation and in the whole Church. These are the men the membership have asked to see to it that the needy and the desolated are helped by the charity of the Church. And this implies that they are to guard both the poor and the Church against wrong. To see to it that neither the poor suffer lack, nor the Church be imposed upon by the undeserving, or become indifferent to the worthy. And, since the great charities of the whole Church are organized, and thus made more efficient, it belongs to the deacon to see to it that the congregation, in which they are called bear office, is informed of the needs of the Church and of the means needed to carry out the work in hand. In our day of so complete organization of our Missionary, Educational and other charitable

work, and under our system of classical apportionment, in which the Classis steps in and relieves the deacon of a part of this labor by asking a definite sum as the congregations share in the charitable work of the Church, deacons are in danger of forgetting that this is just as much their work, as if the Classis had not helped, and that accordingly they can well serve the purposes of their offices by seeing to it that the members of the Church are put in possession of an opportunity of participating in the good work done by the whole Church, by making offerings for this purpose.

From its character the office calls for men possessed of a very high degree of virtue and integrity, for this class of men is the only one whom people are likely to follow. But in every event it ought to be understood that these brethren are your leaders in real benevolent service. You should give them your confidence and support, and whenever any one of them comes to you to commend a good cause do not make their labor harder by insinuating that they are begging again. The

Lord's cause ought not to need any begging. It does not. And if it goes begging in your congregation it is a fearful reflection upon the charity of the Christians there. And whenever you hear anyone complain about the much begging in your Church be sure to take him to a side and ask him to not plead guilty to the charge of neglecting the Lord's business so badly.

It is deacon's labor only in the sense that your congregation asked them to do this work for them and every one in it owes it to these officers to make the burden light. And no one should feel any other way than grateful to them for the help they bring to the life of the Church.

When the deacon comes to you welcome him as bearing a high office in the house of God, whom it is a pleasure to follow in the benevolent work of our denomination, and when finally, you are called to take part in this work, do not try to turn its duties over to another, but conscientiously enter upon it in the fear and by the help of God, assured that "they which have used the office of a

deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.”



Our Judicatories.

In order to get a proper conception of our Church government you must always keep in mind that the relation of the Church to all her members is wholly parental. The members are as in a family, where all are brethren and the whole Church is the mother of us all. The practices of the state cannot apply in our discipline, for in the state all the functions of government are carefully separated and guarded against invasions by each other, and when this distinction is not borne in mind it is apt to lead to confusion in understanding the relation of our Church authorities to the members.

A prominent attorney in presenting a case at one of our synods, once tried to ridicule one of the classes, for acting as prosecutor, jury and judge, all in one, and said he had never in all his life heard of such a thing; but he

had for the moment forgotten, that his mother had in his early life filled all these offices and, at times, had even been the executioner besides.

All the functions of government are exercised by all of our judicatories, under constitutional limitations they make the laws, pass upon them, and see to their execution, as do parents in every family. And these functions are all exercised with a view to developing the spiritual life of the whole family in the Lord. And whenever it occurs that charges of wrongdoing arise the parties are not to be looked upon as, in court parlance, prosecutor and defendant, but as accuser and accused; never as antagonists but as brethren at variance.

The judicatories are constituted by the voice of the whole congregation expressed through the regularly appointed consistories, which are chosen by the votes of all the members. Only such persons as have been called by congregations to bear office in God's house, and set apart to these offices by the solemn act of ordination, can have a voice in

any of the councils of the Church, and so participate in the conduct of its affairs. The consistories make the classes and these in turn select and constitute the synods and General Synod.

Consequently you are to look upon all these bodies as representing the voice of the whole Church, and they represent, in their several capacities, the united household of God in directing the activity and in planning as well as in carrying out all the work of the Redeemer's kingdom within the sphere of the Reformed Church. The authority for so doing, however, originates in the equal membership of the Church and never in the organized, and, wrongly so called, higher bodies.

The Consistory.

This body consists of the pastor, elders, and deacons of each congregation, and acts for the whole body of the church in the conduct of all its business and concern.

It is in all things supreme in each congregation, and in the most important measures, which it must submit to the final decision of

the congregation, it first investigates the whole situation and determines the whole question so fully that it can be submitted to the vote of the members to accept or reject the proposition. So that although the consistory does not actually determine any matter conclusively, it is always the deliberative head of the congregation in all things.

When a pastor is to be called the consistory invites ministers to visit the congregation and preach before the people and decide whether such brother shall be submitted to the congregation as a possible pastor for the congregation. Or they may use their own judgment and propose a minister who has not seen the congregation at all, and only as the consistory elects can any Church vote upon the question of a pastor, and after the election it carries out the will of the congregation.

This same course is pursued in every other question affecting the wellbeing of the congregation directly. In other matters the consistory represents the congregation and acts for it. It fixes salaries, arranges for services, orders the disposition of the alms, selects the

delegates to the Classis and, in short, does everything necessary for the Church as its representative head.

The Classis.

The Classis is composed of all the ministers and a delegated elder from each charge within a given territory in the Church. The voice of the Church, as uttered in the vote of a congregation, has been expressed, in the choice of every member of this body. Only those who have been called into the work of the ministry are entitled to a voice in the deliberations of this body, which is the unit in our organization. Even licentiates, who are enrolled upon the records of the Classis and who may be engaged as teachers in our highest schools, are not qualified to take any active part in the proceedings as voting members. And, although this fact seems a sort of hardship for some very earnest minded and godly men, it demonstrates the high character of the classis as constituting the most important of our general church judicatories. For each member, now, enjoys a call from a congrega-

tion, as setting him in authority in God's house.

There seems to be one apparent exception to this rule, when a missionary is ordained to the Holy ministry, and consequently entitled as a minister of the Gospel to a seat and vote in the Classis; but this is only an apparent exception, for the Board of Missions, in its official character, acts for a congregation which as yet has no organized existence, but which is recognized as at least probable. And, regarding such call as equivalent to a congregational call, the classis or synod is authorized to set such a brother in the office of the Holy ministry.

The Classis, in its service, represents the authority and unity of the Church within its jurisdiction. It supervises the work of the congregations belonging to its territory, and guards them against all possible imposition by false ministers. By its right to confirm calls, it exercises due care in settling all ministers in the congregations, and seeing that only the regularly ordained minister to the people in holy things; and, by its right to

dissolve the pastoral relation where it exists, it again protects the congregation against all hasty or improper resignations of pastors.

It also guards its ministry, both by continually inquiring into their faithfulness and efficiency, and by supporting and defending them against any possible congregational misconduct. At least annually, the classis calls . pastors and elders to an account of their stewardship in the congregations; and inquires into the state of religion and morals of the people under its pastoral care, and also proposes to all the congregations their work.

Thus, with a parent's authority, this assembly of the Church undertakes to watch over the people in the Lord, and to secure for them such faithful performance of christian duties as will tend to develope the whole church in the life of grace; and it enjoys the full right to legislate, or judge, or execute law and judgment, limited only by the customs and good of the Church, under its jurisdiction.

You should as frequently as possible attend the meeting of your classis, and you will

be deeply interested in the earnest and prayerful interest this judicatory exercises in attending to the Lord's business, as it relates to the Church it represents. For, by the Classis all supervision, care, and direction in the Church, and for the Church's good is exercised; and no member of the Church ought to be, at all, unfamiliar with the proceedings of this body, which stands for the free and personally expressed willingness of the membership of the Reformed Church to recognize proper Church authority. For the members of the Church have constituted the Classis for this very purpose.

The Synod.

The synod in the Reformed Church is selected by the Classes choosing representatives out of their membership, ministers and elders in equal numbers, to compose that 'body, so that you see the synod is a truly representative, and, as all its members are responsible to the classis, which elects them, it is equally clear that the term higher body as applied to the synod is only used in a relative sense,

and refers merely to the greater representative jurisdiction exercised by the synod.

The chief work of the synod is first of all to review the proceedings of the classes and to pass upon the regularity of their actions, and to approve or disapprove of them.

The synod, because of its wider range of supervision and greater realm of jurisdiction, determines all questions between the classes, or members of different classes. But that you may see that the authority to exercise these prerogatives over the classes comes from the classes and not from the synod, even in its organized capacity, it should be added that no part of a classis can be detached from it and added to another without the expressed consent of the classis, much less could synod dissolve or constitute on its own motion a classis.

The Synod is also charged with the care of the larger Church activities, such as education, theological and beneficiary, and publication. By this means the Church is guarded against irresponsible teaching and culture of the membership, and its unity of doctrine

and practice is conserved. This does not deny to any individual or corporation undertaking independently, the establishment of schools or the publication of literature, but as such have no synodical oversight and bear no responsibility to the synod, they cannot be looked upon as Church institutions, but only as private enterprises for good purposes.

The synods may upon their own motion meet in, what is called, a general assembly, in which case it is composed of all the ministers and an elder from each pastoral bounds, within its bounds, and such meetings are common with the smaller synods of the Church. Such procedure does not in anywise affect the character of the synod, as a body, and only makes it more generally representative.

When you have opportunity, attend your synod and learn its methods and so acquire a wider knowledge of your church work and organization.

The General Synod.

This judicatory represents the whole Church, and, in this sense, is properly spoken

of as the highest judicatory of the Reformed Church. It is made up of delegates chosen by all the classes in the Church, and is, like the district synod, a purely representative body. It stands for the unity of the whole Church in the realm of authority, but an authority which rests for its support upon the classis and congregation.

The meetings of the General Synod are triennial; and to preserve the harmony of this organization with the others in the Church, and to save it from assuming the headship of the Church, the constitution of the Church expressly sets forth that the General synod shall be governed in its proceedings by the constitution of the Church, and the rules of order prescribed for the synod.

To the General Synod is committed everything which affects the life and character of the whole Church. It supervises the proceedings of the Synods and approves or disapproves them. It directs the missionary enterprises of the Church in both home and foreign fields. And has charge of the Liturgy, Catechism, Constitution, Hymn books and

all the ordinances of the Church. All changes in any of the ordinances must originate in the General synod which stands in the relation to the Classes much as the Consistory stands in the Congregation. The General Synod considers and determines all the questions affecting the ordinances of the Church and then submits them to the Classes for acceptance or rejection.

In this way the General Synod conserves the unity of the whole Church, and directs the work of the denomination. Through its boards, it presents the important work resting upon all the members; and the Church carries out the work thus planned and outlined by the body which appointed to lead in this representative work.

Be sure to attend a meeting of the General Synod, even if you have to go out of your way to do so. You will recognize the ability of your denomination to do her full share in the Master's service in no way better than by stepping into a meeting and witnessing the representative men of the Church dealing

with the problems presented by the work the General Synod always has in hand.



Our Start in America.

The beginning of our Church on this continent, so far as we can learn with any degree of certainty, is one of sadness.

There may have been, no doubt there were, among the Germans in the earliest settlements of this country, ministers of the Reformed Church, but there are no records to verify this opinion. Even the name of any minister who at all represented our Church before the coming of the Palatines is wanting. And, indeed, exactly the same must be said of the pastors who came with the refugees from the valley of the Upper Rhine ; but it is very hard to conceive of such a body of pious people, as the Palatines must have been, coming over as wanderers into this new country by the thousands without some ministers among them. There are no records of ministers accompanying the persecuted driven Palatines as they came to this country, and yet

that one can hardly believe that of all the pastors who served these people among the vine clad hills of the Upper Rhine, none should be found who would go with them, and share with them the hardship and poverty which followed their expulsion from the devasted Palatinate. It is easier to believe that their ministers came with them, and that inexplicable hindrances of poverty and dire need kept them from organizing permanent congregations. At least, in the better day that followed, when Mr. Weiss, in 1726 he came with 400 people from the "Palatinate upon the Rhine into this Province of Pensilvania," there would hardly have been any record of his work, but for the evidence recorded in famous case before the Court of Chancery at Philadelphia 1732.

There is little record of the coming of the Palatines, but what there is ought to be remembered.

When Louis XIV of France, disappointed both in his ambition and in his greed for empire, ordered the devastation of the Palatinate, the Reformed Exodus, to which we with-

out a doubt owe our beginning in America, began. Literally thousands of members of the Reformed dwellers in the Palatinate, homeless and in poverty, because all their property, as well as every means of subsistence had been shamelessly destroyed, wandered away from the smoking ruins of cities, towns, villages, homes and fields of the once beautiful lands of their fathers; and whither?

As they journeyed by multitudes in hunger and rags, they were often fed at public expense and sent further on their way until they came into Holland from whence they were scattered all over the world. Some going into Germany others into the Dutch Indies, and many into England, where because of the opposition of the trades guilds, who feared the result of the competition of these Germans who would work for any price sooner than be paupers, the attention of Queen Anne was called to them, and she finally invited the suffering Germans to locate in America and provided transportation for large numbers of them herself. And this was the company

who without a question marked the beginning of our Reformed Church on American soil.

To these, as years went on, members were added, and here and there, an earnest minister beat a track in the unbroken wilderness of unrecorded suffering, anxiety, want. But at most, a few scattered names, such as Hager, Weiss, Boehme, Rieger, is what we have; to which should perhaps be added that so late as 1750 the last named invited ministers of unstained character to the welcome and support of the Church and warned the Church against “degraded deposed babblers” who came because ministers were few and the people anxious for the Gospel. From which much can be inferred as to the need and supply of ministers in the days of our beginning.

How shall we sufficiently thank God who preserved His Church through that dark day in her history other than by a most devoted loyalty to Him and the Church He saved for His own good and wise purpose.

The year 1746, with the coming of Michael Schlatter, may however be set as the historical beginning of our denomination, for then

was organized the first Coetus — as the original body of ministers and elders was called — which differed from the classis and synod of our present organization in the fact that it was a purely advisory body and had absolutely no other jurisdiction in the world. It surveyed the field and reported what should be done, and distributed the support which the Classis of Amsterdam and the Synods of Holland so generously contributed for the support of the work.

Whilst this course did not develope great strength and usefulness, it nevertheless succeeded in holding together what otherwise must have been a lost Church. And for nearly fifty years the Fathers in Holland supported the forefathers of our denomination, and the day ought never to come when you should not be grateful to God and the brethren He used to keep us for His service in this country.

On April 27th A. D. 1793 was organized the first Synod of our Church which adopted as its title the Synod of the German Reformed Church of the United States of America, and

that marked the real beginning of the denomination as a separate organization. The whole number of ministers of our Church, in the Synod, at that time was 22, with about 100 congregations, having a membership of 11,680 communicant members, from which you may from time to time compare the numbers of your ministers, churches and members, and settle in your own mind by what act of pious devotion you will honor God for the growth and purposes of the Church in which He is using you in His service and for His glory.



A Last Word.

Just a Word to Close.

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You are, or you ought to become a communicant member of the Reformed Church, and for this reason I desire to give you as we part company one additional counsel.

Strive to become a faithful and an intelligent member of the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

If you have such a desire there is no better way for you than to acquaint yourself with the literature of your Church. The body of our literature as a denomination is not large and every earnest member of our Church may with but a small outlay become the possessor of all the books, so far, published by the ministers of the Reformed Church in the United States. Buy them and read them.

Our current literature is limited but, what there is, is very helpful to the end I am

directing you. You ought, in the first place, read, regularly, the paper published by your synod. So that you may know just what is occupying the mind of the Church. You will know of the progress and needs of the denomination, in her educational, missionary and charitable work, in no way so well as by a careful reading of the literature prepared to give this particular information. Your Synod's paper brings as no other periodical can the particular need of the hour, and you ought not to deny yourself the benefit of such help.

You will, thus, be more conversant with the schools and institutions of your church: Where they are ; what they are doing ; what they may need. Your energies will be the more intelligently directed, when you know what your brethren in the church are doing, and that you are helping along in the general good work of the Church.

You will understand more fully the objects of charity to which your church is devoting her benevolences. And you will realize that the work undertaken is worthy of the Church

and consequently your personal delight in almsgiving will be increased.

You will, in short, come into intelligent sympathy with every good work of the Church both at large and, especially, within the bounds of the immediate organization to which you belong and in which God has by His grace gathered you for service. It was no accident which made your christian life to be developed in your own church organization, and you can, really, be loyal to Christ best of all when you serve Him at the post He put you.

Other synods have equally good papers, and the broad minded believer who loves his whole Church will not do otherwise than to read the publications of the whole Church, but, if for any reason you are denied such privilege, then read prayerfully the one published by your Synod. You will be able to get cheaper papers, more sensational papers, larger papers, different papers of many varying characteristics, but you will never be able to get a more helpful periodical than the one which brings to you the news,

the thought, the instruction, the work of your own spiritual leaders. If yours should cost more it is only because it is the more important in your denominational development.

Along with your Bible which should always be your daily guide and help, read your Church paper so that you will always have and enjoy the knowledge of what God is accomplishing by your Church, and so be able yourself to have an intelligent part in all that work.

The more intelligently you serve your God in the congregation and Church in which He has put you the more definitely loyal will you be to Him who has given you a place to work in His vineyard.

And now praying that God will ever find many uses for you in His kingdom,

Farewell,

J. M. Schick.

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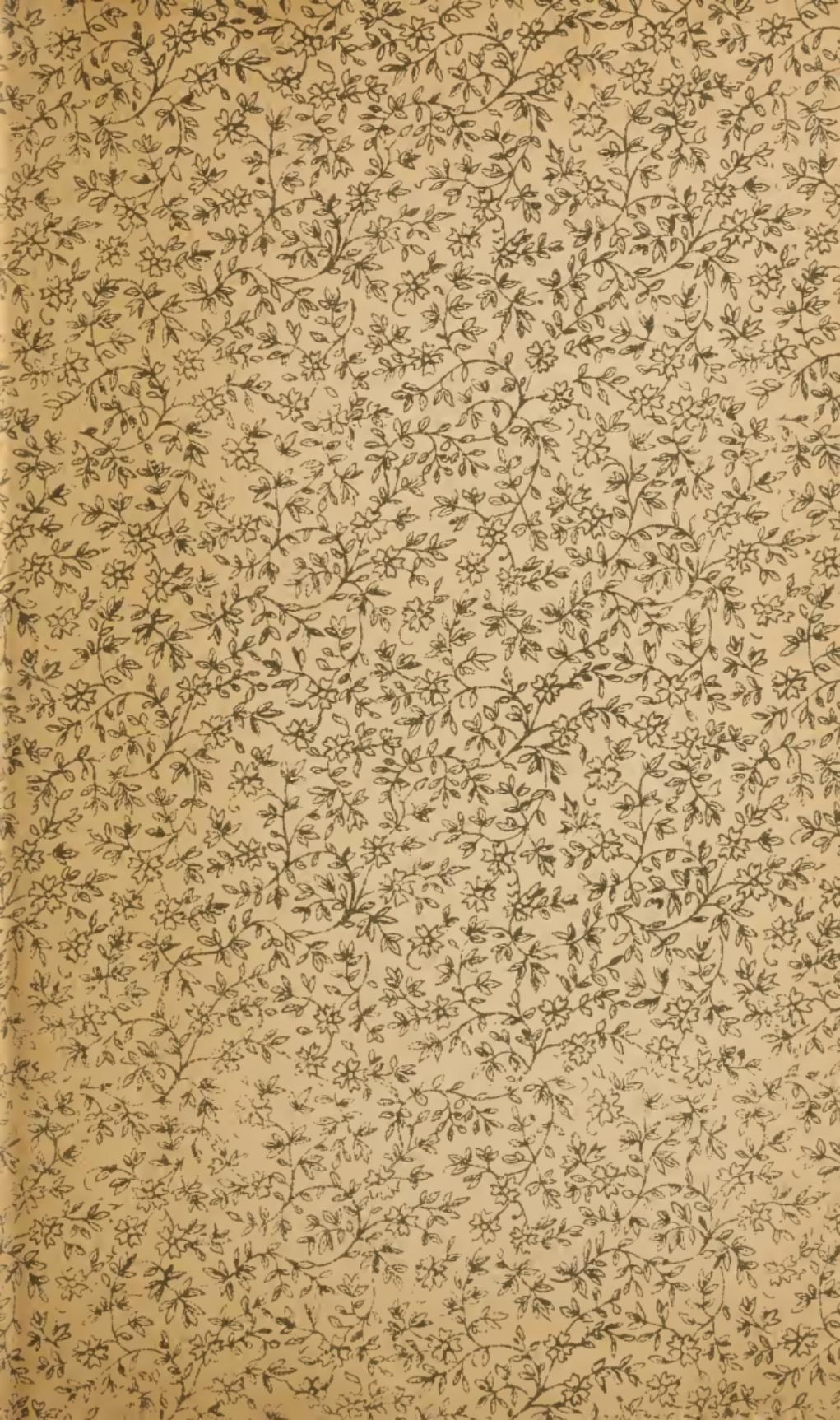
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